

1355. A. 22

SEVERAL AFFECTING
CONSIDERATIONS
RESPECTING THE
UNBENEFICED
CLERGY,

WITH ALL

HUMILITY AND EARNESTNESS ADDRESSED AND RECOMMENDED TO THE SERIOUS AND CANDID ATTENTION OF OUR GOVERNORS IN CHURCH AND STATE.

BY A CLERGYMAN OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

— *If I have spoken Evil, bear witness of the
Evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?*

HONOR VERITATI DETUR.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

TWELVE SERMONS,

Most of which have been preached upon particular Occasions,
And are adapted to the present Times.

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LONDON PRINTED, MDCCLXIX.



P R E F A C E.

THE following considerations, it is too justly to be apprehended, will come into the world under great disadvantages from the situation of their author; for as fortune has not been kind to him; so, those, who, from her *capricious distributions*, may form their estimate of men and things, will probably be little disposed to be so. Had he possessed in the church a dignified station, or a very lucrative benefice, this, in the opinion of such, would have added great weight to his sentiments, and have been a strong recommendation to their notice and approbation: and so fully is he convinced of the *justness of such reasoning*, that he heartily wishes, he could have come so

recommended to their favour. He had however no ambition to appear in print, could he have enjoyed the sweets of an unblemished reputation, and his small income, free from the unjust encroachments of a *base violator* of them both : and would rather have passed through life in a low and tranquil state, than have been the subject of debate or conversation any where.

BUT the very ungenteel treatment he has met with, and the many idle insinuations that have been propagated with design to injure his character, obliged him to have recourse to this publick method, both to justify his own conduct, and to rectify the misrepresentations of others concerning him. And when he took up the pen for this purpose ; the many grievances which the unbeneficed clergy in general labour under, as well as those particularly affecting himself, occurred to his mind ; and he hoped it might not be an unuseful attempt to present them to the view of mankind ; either as hints for the improvement of those,

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in whom they might find a disposition to redress them: or to excite some abler hand, more fully and pathetically to portray them. But the misfortune is, that *that* part of the clergy who feel them not, do not much regard them: and are so far from being advocates for their unblessed brethren, that from their behaviour, one must conclude, they rather wish the continuance, than the removal of the many inconveniences, unto which, they cannot be ignorant, they are unavoidably subject: otherwise it is in their power by an augmentation of their salaries and a gentleman-like behaviour, to render their stations in life much less ineligible than they are at present. And as these would be voluntary acts, they would constitute a very amiable part of their character, and entitle them to the grateful acknowledgments of those who were the immediate objects of them. There may be here and there one that may chuse to do so:—and did not the apprehension of incurring the suspicion of a *vice*, which the author always

did

did, and hopes, he shall ever detect, prevent him; he could with pleasure present the publick with the names of several very worthy clergymen, who do honour to their function, as well as receive honour from it; and by their fraternal kindness and affection to their assistants, and to mankind in general, have, as far as the knowledge of them extends, acquired universal and cordial respect; which to such a laudable disposition and deportment is certainly due. But the general practice, God knows, is quite the reverse; and plainly evinces that nothing but the interposition of the legislature, can settle these ecclesiastical affairs upon a desirable basis; and totally remedy an evil, which by most men is observed and lamented, but very severely felt by those upon whom it immediately falls.

THE author declares it is not his design in what he has wrote to offend any man, but if the honest truths he has delivered shall make him appear in the light of an enemy, and cause him to be treated as
lib. such;

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such; he can only consider this, as the outrage and resentment of a guilty mind, which has too much pride to bear a monitor, and too little sense of goodness to attempt a reformation of its faults.

*Idem si clamat furem, neget esse pudicum,
Contendat laqueo collum pressisse paternum;
Mordeat opprobriis falsis, mutemque colores?
Falsus bonar juvat, et mendax infamia terret,
Quem, nisi mendosum et mendacem?* —

HOR.

HE should be extremely sorry to disturb the repose of a man of true goodness and merit for a single moment; and as for those, who have very little or none of either, he neither courts their favour, nor dreads their resentment.

IT would afford him an unspeakable pleasure could he be the most humble and distant instrument, in procuring a comfortable establishment for the unbeneficed clergy, as he must always esteem it a most necessary

necessary work, and such as would be not only preventive of many future ills, but productive likewise of very numerous and great advantages: but if this is a happiness which the temper of the times is not disposed to grant him; he must endeavour to sooth the pain of his disappointment, by reflecting on the goodness of his intention; and be content to be thrown aside, like many others before him, who have meant as well, and been as little regarded, as he can.

As to the relation he gives of the transaction betwixt the R—r and his C—te: if any part of the R—r's character appears *low and mean*; this the reader will be pleased to consider, the writer is not blameable for, as being no fault of his, but of the person whom he was honestly to represent.—If a picture must be drawn, it ought to resemble the original; and whatever blemishes and deformities may be in this, ought, if a similitude and just idea

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ideas are to be conveyed, to be portrayed in the other: otherwise, however the painter may flatter and please his employer, there is a deficiency either in his heart or in his hand—a want of honesty, or a want of skill. Though it must be allowed, that there are several *dark strokes* that the pen might have given, to have rendered the R—r's picture more complete; which, though they might have made the piece more displeasing to a eye that looks for beauty, would certainly have given it a more *striking likeness*.

WHEN a man's faults indeed, hurt nobody but himself, benevolence might incline one to throw over them a veil, rather than expose them to the examination and ridicule of the publick: but when they become hurtful to others; and the reputation and happiness of the innocent are injured by them, they forfeit all title then to lenity and concealment; and a personal regard requires every man to do himself justice, whatever ill consequence may

may accuse to those who meant him wrong.

If a man tells a jocular lie merely to promote mirth in company, (though it is in itself *morally* wrong); a good natured world may, if it pleases, laugh at, and look over it. But if a man with a vile and malevolent view, shall report a falsity to the detriment of the reputation of another; such practice deserves a serious animadversion: and to acquiesce in an abuse of this nature, would be construed as a tacit acknowledgment of guilt, and would make a man obnoxious to all that censure and contempt, which is the just desert of his base defamer. It is therefore a duty which a man owes not only to himself, but to the rest of mankind, to pull off from such a deceiver, that specious mask by which he has imposed upon the credulous and unwary; and to exhibit the cheat to the view and scorn of the whole world; that every one may be apprised of his dangerous disposition, and guard against

against him, as against a common enemy; more to be avoided than the villain that has a design upon their purse, — which, compared to reputation, is *trash* — not worth regarding.

WHEN a man of this character has crept into the priesthood, and occupies the seat of an instructor of the people; how much must religion suffer by him? And what an incorrigible hardness of heart, as well as of countenance, must it betray, for such a one to inveigh against those vices in the midst of a congregation, of which he is known to be the most shameful pattern!

How can a man, without the utmost confusion of face, descant upon the dissingenuity and injuriousness of lying, whose conscience will inform him, that it is a practice of which himself is most infamously guilty? — How can he dare to pronounce the denunciations of heaven against the oppressor; who has numerous acts

b

of

of oppression to charge himself with — or to enforce from christian arguments the great duties of charity and forgiveness, who pursues his fellow-creature with an implacable malice; and in his calmest moments meditates the surest methods of revenge and ruin? A man who pretends to teach another, should certainly be careful to teach himself: (a) otherwise whatever boast he may make of the *gospel*, through breaking the *gospel*, he *most* dishonours God; as the name of God will be more blasphemed through him, than through any other man in a different station.

SUCH people whose misfortune it is to have such a wretched director set over them, are greatly to be pitied; and the best advice I can give is, that they would take their religion from their bibles—or follow the doctrines their teacher may deliver, without being influenced by the example of the deliverer: for though he may say, and do not; nay! may do the very contrary; if what he says is right, conscien-

(a) Rom. ii.

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tionously adhere to that, and leave the wrong to himself to answer for!

THE author solemnly declares that whatever he has asserted as a fact is strictly true; and that he has honestly delivered his sentiments throughout the whole. What sort of reception his endeavours may meet with, he cannot ascertain; but, like every parent that is solicitous for the welfare of his offspring, he wishes them an happy one. And begs leave to assure the witlings and criticasters into whose hands what he has done may fall, that if they are disposed to look into his performance for inaccuracies and errors, they will not thereby disturb either the quiet of his mind or of his pen; as he shall consider every such search as proceeding more from a bad heart, than a good head; and as a proof of ill-nature, rather than of solid judgment. For as he is conscious to himself, that his aim and design are laudable and good, so he cannot but please himself with

with the imagination, that whatever the success and execution may be, every candid and sensible reader will pardon the imperfections for the merit of the intention.

*Vive ; vale. Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti : si non, his utere mecum.*

HOR.

SEVERAL

SEVERAL

Affecting Considerations

RESPECTING THE

UNBENEFICED CLERGY.

THAT body of men which has been dedicated to an immediate attendance upon, and ministration in sacred offices, has in all ages and countries been considered, both by the pious and the politick as an useful and respectable order in their community. The greater the veneration which has been paid by the people to the Deity which they worshipped, the greater respect have their priests received: and the more sensible the one seemed to be of the blessings derived from
A religion,

religion, in proportion did the other participate their favour and esteem. Inasmuch that, unless where the mind is under an improper influence, it appears to be a natural compliment, which we can scarcely withhold from the object of our affection, to express a partial fondness for those employed by it; and notwithstanding they may have little, or nothing of personal merit to recommend themselves to us, this connexion with their principal will alone be sufficient to incline us to hold them in respectful estimation.* The servant of a beloved master is sure therefore to meet with kind and obliging treatment; and the bearer of an acceptable message will himself be acceptable, to whomsoever he is sent.

* THE author by what he here observes, would not be understood to mean, that there is no difference in the respect which good and bad men, in the order he is speaking of, receive; since it is manifest that the former are distinguished by a superior and more cordial degree of it, than the latter are thought entitled unto; but that for the sake of their office, they all will in general, be treated by those who have a serious regard for religion with more reverence and esteem (*cæteris paribus*) than the rest of mankind; or than merely upon their own personal account, would be shewn them.

No

No wonder then, wherever a Deity has been revered, and the happiness of mankind supposed to be dependent upon that being, if the people have paid to his immediate servants and attendants a suitable respect: And this, not merely as a testimony of their reverential affection for their Deity; but probably from an opinion *however founded*, that his ministers like *those* about the persons of great princes, might have a peculiar interest in their common master. And accordingly in all *times* and *places*, the priesthood, we may find, has shared pretty largely in the honours and opulence of every nation; * not only been admitted into the most important offices of dignity and confidence; but that religion might be exercised with a becoming splendor and decorum, has had, according to the power and prosperity of states, considerable advantages and emoluments conferred upon it,

* THE priests in Egypt, as we are told by Diodorus Siculus, l. 1. were either the king's agents or directors in all affairs of a public nature; and to such a degree were their appointments augmented, that the third part of the whole kingdom was got into their hands,

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HAD these secular distinctions not been carried to an excessive degree : and could they have been born with *moderation* and a *proper temper* of mind, we may presume from the directions of infinite wisdom itself, that there is nothing in them unreasonable or inconsistent with the sacred character. Since God Almighty in the old dispensation, as must be observable by every one, who peruses his bible with any tolerable attention, took effectual care both to render the priesthood honourable, and to make ample provision for its subsistence. (*a*)

THE tribe of Levi, unto which the priesthood was annexed, was excluded indeed all inheritance amongst his brethren; (*b*) but for the loss of a twelfth share, it was recompensed with a tithe of all the rest: and as the Jews carried on no trade or commerce with other nations, but confined themselves principally to the cultivation of their lands, and made the improvement of these, and the

(*a*) Exod. xxviii. xxix. and xxx. passim. Num. xvi. xvii. and xviii.

(*b*) Deut. x. 8, 9.—Num. xviii. 20, et seq. increase

increase of their cattle the object of their attention and care; this assignment could not but be a very considerable portion. And if to this we add their participation in the numerous and costly sacrifices imposed upon that people, (a) which the same institutor appointed, we must be forced to conclude, that the provision made for the priesthood, was not only very sufficient, but that it was an undeniable testimony of the regard of that gracious being for them, whose ministers they were.

THAT divine person who abolished the Jewish, and introduced the Christian religion, though he ordained twelve of his followers *that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach*; (b) from the condition which he was pleased to assume, had neither ability to support them himself, without the exertion of his omnipotent power in miraculously feeding and clothing them; nor authority to settle

(a) Num. xviii. et variis locis.

(b) Mark iii. 14. Luke ix. i. &c.

6 CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

upon them any certain and independent revenue: He who was so poor that he *had not where to lay his head, (a)* must be very ill qualified to furnish his disciples with any extraordinary accommodations: And the favour and interest he obtained amongst the Great Ones of the world, were very insufficient to procure for his ministers any legal establishment. To the providence of God he therefore recommended them, and taught them on *this* fiducially to rely; insomuch that they were *to provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in their purses, (b)* as they would, and ought to, be supplied with every thing that was necessary for them out of the substance of those, whom they found disposed to embrace their doctrine.

THIS was the *first* and the *only* method which was pointed out by the great institutor of Christianity for the support of the preachers of his gospel: and subsisted amongst them for three centuries after

(a) Mat. viii. 20. (b) Mat. x. 9, &c. Luke ix. 3, &c.

CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

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his appearance upon earth : Through all which time they lived upon the voluntary oblations of the faithful ; who judged it highly reasonable ; that they who had *sown upon them spiritual things*, should in return *reap a comfortable share of their carnal things*. (a) Not, we may suppose, because it was the best method that could be devised ; but because it was the best which the circumstances of those times admitted ; and could only be exchanged for a better, when the legislative power of states became christian ; without whose aid and concurrence in matters of property not any thing could be *effectually* determined.

AND accordingly, soon after the conversion of the Roman Emperors to christianity ; not only large contributions were conveyed through the bishops to the clergy out of the imperial revenues ; but it became a matter of political consideration how they should be furnished with a constant and legal provision.

AT what particular period this provision

(a) i. Cor. ix. 11.

was

was made, it may not be easy with exactness to determine; but whenever it was settled, it was judged most eligible that it should arise from tithes: which, whether the christian clergy have a divine right to, or not; those who gave the preference to this mode are certainly very justifiable, from the example and directions of God himself under the Jewish œconomy. For from thence might be infered, not only the necessity of providing for the clergy, but as far as was practicable under a different dispensation, *in the same way*: that method being likely to be concluded the wisest and most agreeable to God; of which himself was the author; and which had been ordained for the observance of his peculiar people. Tithes therefore we find mentioned so early as the year 356; wherein at a provincial synod assembled at Cullen, they are voted to be God's rent. And the 5th. canon of the council of Matiscona, held in the year 585, orders tithes to be paid to the ministers of the church,

ACCORDING TO THE LAW OF GOD AND
THE

CONSIDERATIONS, &c. 9

THE IMMEMORIAL CUSTOM OF CHRISTI-
ANS, upon pain of excommunication.*
And in our own country it is alledged,
that tithes have been paid by statute, ever
since the Saxon king Athelstan, in the year
928. And what great riches in aftertimes
flowed in upon the clergy, from other sources,
a little acquaintance with English history
will sufficiently inform us. But as these
were principally obtained by the introduction
of false opinions into their religion, which
operated strongly upon the minds of the people,
and made them subservient to the secular views
of vain glorious and mercenary men, they are
to be looked upon as the wages of deceit and
ignorance; and must be condemned by all
in whose estimate *gain* is not preferable to
godliness. Our wise reformers therefore
had not only the discernment to discover
the imposition, but the honesty to expose
it. They de vested the clergy of that ty-

* It is from this canon and the reasons upon which it is
founded, that many have asserted that tithes belong to the
clergy, *jure divino*.

10 CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

rannical power, which, without any scripture-authority, they had usurped over the bodies and consciences of men; and dispelled from the minds of the laity, that gross darkness in which they were involved, and *which is always the parent of weak credulity and vain superstition*; settling religion upon its only proper basis—the WORD OF GOD; with a full liberty and their advice imparted to every member of the church, carefully to consult this infallible guide; that no doctrine might be received merely upon the credit of the teacher; nor at all, unless expressly declared in it, or by rational inference deducible from it.* This was the way indeed to render our church a GLORIOUS CHURCH(*a*)—to make its design co-incident with *that* of its ever ADORABLE HEAD—to promote the true honour of God, and the practise of real piety and virtue amongst mankind.

BUT whilst these changes were brought about in religion, the incomes of the

* Art. of Relig. 6.

(*a*) Eph. v. 27.

clergy

clergy must of consequence suffer great diminution;—those advantages ceasing of course, which were derived from doctrines that were then exploded. For no offerings would be made to saints, when saints were supposed to have lost their intercessive power; nor, when a disbelief of purgatory took place, would the purchasing of masses with extraordinary endowments and donations, for the redemption of souls out of it, be any longer a custom. But when these, and other such like *unjustifiable* sources of their wealth were stopped; there would be, arising from the tithes, a sufficiency left, for the decent and comfortable support of the clergy :*

as

* We cannot but upon this occasion lament the numerous impropriations in this kingdom,—to the amount, it is said, of 3845; by which the greatest part of the tithe is alienated from particular churches, and either invested in episcopal hands, in some college, &c. or made an inheritance of a meer temporal nature. When, or by whom these impropriations were introduced, is not with certainty transmitted. And how far they may be thought justifiable, especially those which are become lay-property, will chiefly depend upon the opinion which is entertained of the foundation of tithes in general. For they who look upon tithes to belong to the clergy *jure divino*, and that the laws of Moses relating to them

as judiciously and equitably applied to every individual, as it is legally secured for the use and encouragement of the clerical order in general; the priesthood would be esteemed far more honourable than it is, and numbers in it would enjoy much greater comfort and respect, than, in the present state of things, are likely to

them are not abrogated by the gospel, must consider all such property as a *sacrilegious invasion and detention* of the right of God's ministers. But others, who consider tithes only as a human institution, will be apt to conclude, that the same power which appropriated them to the maintainance of the clergy, may, whenever it pleases, settle a portion of them upon any other person.—Though it seems somewhat inconsistent, that a lay-man should be entitled to any part of that emolument, which was conferred in consideration of a spiritual service.

BUT let this matter be reconciled how it may—I presume, it will be readily allowed by every disinterested mind, that the vicar should not be so abridged in his income, as he too frequently is; but should have a *congrua portio*—a fit and decent appointment assigned him, over and above the endowment of his vicarage, bearing a *proper* proportion to the whole of the profits annexed to his church.

BUT scarcely any thing of this sort can indeed be expected from the lay-proprietors of tithes, whilst our e—st—l L—ds set them no better an example.

PITY it is, that a power superior to them both, should not take the management of such affairs into its own hands.
fall

fall to their share. But the want of this regulation is the most obvious blemish or defect in our ecclesiastical polity; as well as the occasion of much infelicity to a considerable part of the most laborious, and, perhaps in justice we ought sometimes to say, *not the least deserving*, part of our clergy. For how many are there confined to a very scanty pittance, scarcely sufficient with œconomy for the comfortable accommodation of a single person; and much less is it adequate to the numerous and pressing exigencies of a family! Whilst others are either *luxuriously* squandering away, or *avaritiously* accumulating, the wealth of the church;—supporting their extravagancies, or raising their families, by the painful labours of an humble and neglected substitute; to the manifest scandal of their sacred vocation, and to the unspeakable detriment and disreputation of their holy profession.

THE honest laity look upon such practises with that abhorrence and concern which they really deserve;—often make them
the

the subject of their complaints in their private conversation,—and are unable to suppress their fearful apprehensions upon account of religion; whose general decay they cannot but ascribe to the little encouragement given to some; and to an impropriety of behaviour in many others of the clergy; who ought to be its brightest ornaments, and constant recommendation. And upon these accounts it is, that they sorely lament the want of a national regulation; which is the only means *effectually* to cure and prevent these fatal grievances; which, whilst they subsist, will sink religion still lower in the opinion of mankind, and render it less significant and obligatory than it appears at present. For that part of the clergy, who are the most useful in keeping up the *small remains* of credit and regard which are paid to it; through their penury and dependence, want much of that weight and influence, which would enable them to be more serviceable in their vocation, and in the glorious cause of their blessed master. For let a man's intellectu-
al

al endowments be however great—let his education be the best the nation affords—let his conduct and morals be uniformly regular, and irreproachable—Yet after all, if he is obliged (as God knows is too often the case) to hire himself upon the present conditions to some mercenary priest for bread; his abilities will receive from his *small stipend* a great disadvantage, and his example lose much of its worth and lustre. So strongly has the world connected the ideas of merit, with wealth and promotion, that where these are wanting, the other is seldom supposed to exist; and a meanness of genius is almost as commonly inferred from a meanness in condition, as if the one was the natural consequence of the other. His publick discourses will therefore be attended to, with such a kind of indifferency, as plainly indicates in the hearer little expectation, either of information, or amusement;—his private judgment will be deemed far inferior to that of his more fortunate neighbour;—and his admonitions and reproofs, if he has resolution

resolution enough to impart them, will be esteemed like his purse, light and insignificant. But in *these* he must be very cautious and sparing; and possibly may not venture to use them at all; lest the few favours, which a compassion for his necessities may excite, should be totally withdrawn; and himself and his dependents experience the recompence of his *honest* zeal in an aggravated distress. He must therefore be a silent spectator of many indecencies; and in some, the fear of incurring the displeasure and neglect of his friend and benefactor, may prevail with him to partake: *—By his example giving countenance to practises in the parlour, which by his function, in the pulpit he is obliged to condemn. Thus the pover-

* ODERUNT hilarem tristes, tristemque jocos;
Sedatum celeres, agilem gnavumque remissi:
Potores bibuli mediâ de nocte Falerni
Oderunt porrecta negantem pocula; quamvis
Nocturnos jures te formidare vapores.——Hor.

Or perhaps through an apprehension of evils, which amongst Christians ought to be judged of infinitely greater consequence.

ty of the minister occasions a defeat of the end of his ministry: And religion, instead of finding in him a principal guardian and support, through the prejudices and inconveniences attendant upon his condition, not only loses much of that awful veneration, which is certainly its due; but is oftentimes treated with unconcern and irreverence, if not with such palpable contempt, as the notion of its being a device of priests and politicians, may be apt to inspire. *

BUT

* I AM not unapprehensive, that the reader will be very quick in censuring this behaviour; and ready to inform such a pusillanimous son of the church; — that as he is enlisted into the service of a master who is able to secure him from the hurtful effects of all human resentment, he ought not by any submission or connivance to desert *his* cause; but upon all occasions, with an unintimidated confidence, to stand up in behalf of his laws; and to submit the consequence with regard to himself, to his never-failing care, and gracious Providence; — That few, or none, could be offended at a liberty, which was taken for such laudable purposes — and if they were, that God could not be supposed to want either will or power, to compensate any damage he might thereby sustain.

BUT it may be observed in answer to this, that there is no design to justify such conduct, from the bare mentioning
that

BUT it is not sufficient, that the clergy have barely a competency—be just situated above want and dependence; but they should be enabled likewise to contribute

that it is likely to be. Clergymen, no doubt, have all the passions and infirmities of their nature cleaving to them, as well as the rest of mankind; and whilst they labour under the pressures of want, it will be very difficult from *any* consideration to prevail with them, to engage in a practice, which carries with it the appearance of a probability to increase them.

AND whatever may be suggested to the contrary: few men, it is well known, can bear to be interrupted in their favourite pleasures and pursuits;—and much less, to be rebuked for them: and if any thing of this sort shall proceed from one, who is at all dependent, their resentment is not only more quickly excited, but more violent and lasting: a freedom, which, from another under different circumstances, would occasion but little emotion, and be easily forgiven; will, from this, be construed as an unpardonable impertinence and ingratitude: for which, as far as they have power, he shall like the prophet Micaiah, i. Kings, xxii. 27. *be fed with the bread and water of affliction.*

THOUGH it must be allowed, that to approve and respect a man, who *steadily and honestly* acts up to his character, is a testimony both of a great and a good mind, as well as of a good understanding; and indicates the gentleman, no less than the man of sense:—agreeable to *these*, and such like observations—*The ear that beareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise*; Prov. xv. 31. *But he that hateth reproof, is brutish.* xii. 1.

to the relief of the indigent and unhappy, as well as to make some reserve for their own personal sickness, or misfortunes; from which, the sacredness of their vocation does not at all exempt them.

THAT branch of charity which consists in beneficence, does of all others the most powerfully recommend us to the cordial esteem of our fellow-creature. Any other virtue may be occasionally admired, and receive its due commendation, but the effects of this are communicable, and sensibly felt: and whilst we are exercising it, we not only display an amiable character; but in imitation of the Supreme Goodness, are dispensing around us blessings and felicity. A man may be pious—be just—be peaceable; and, no doubt, will find great comfort and satisfaction from being so: but whatever advantages from these good qualities accrue to himself, nothing more than a freedom from harm (save the influence of his example) can accrue to others. He will be looked upon as an honest and quiet neighbour; — one from

whom no injury whether in person, reputation, or property, need to be apprehended, and his name may be mentioned with that kind of respect, unto which such a progress in his duty may entitle him. But endue the same man with an *ability*, and suppose him but an *inclination*, to be beneficent; and what an amiable addition do you make to his character? He might gain the favourable *opinion* of mankind before, but now he gains their affections; — is considered as their common friend and benefactor; to whom they will readily pay a superior deference and regard; and who will find both their ears and hearts more open and accessible, than otherwise they would have been.

AND if beneficence is productive of such effects, it must be a great misfortune both to the pastor and to the people, where the clergy are so cramped in their ability as not to have it in their power to shew it: for they have a business to transact of the utmost importance to mankind, and such as of all others merits their attention most:
and

and if the reasonableness of what they offer, is of itself insufficient to make upon their minds its due impress; 'tis fit they should enjoy every other advantage, which might assist their endeavours, and give a bias to their audience, in favour of their salutary advice and instruction.

It is an observation founded upon experience—that the congregation ought to come prepared, no less than the preacher: there must be a previous disposition to hear, as well as a precomposed discourse to be heard; which may, however appositely, be framed in vain, if the auditors minds are not in a proper frame to listen to it. If there is a prejudice against the man, his doctrine will be but little regarded; and though there can be no sufficient reason assigned, to justify the rejection of truth, from our dislike to the messenger of it; yet wherever there is a dislike, it will insensibly give such a bias to our judgments, that we shall treat with coolness or contempt, any divine or moral lessons, which, had we been prepossessed in favour of the

speaker, had yielded us much delight and edification.

HIGHLY necessary therefore is it, for the clergy, to be solicitous, by every rational and prudent method, to recommend themselves to the affections of their people; not to behave themselves with a supercilious reserve and haughtiness towards them; *neither as being lords over God's heritage; but being ensamples to the flock; (a)* being courteous, affable, and obliging: and upon all occasions *especially*, according to their respective abilities, shewing a readiness with their *advice*—their *power*—or their *purse*, to strengthen their weaknesses, and to alleviate their wants.

WHERE the salvation of souls is really and *ex animo*, intended, this will seem a point of no small concernment—to have themselves considered in the most engaging light; that the sphere of their utility may be thereby enlarged; and that they may become the more instrumental in enhancing their own, *(b)* as well as in bringing

(a) i. Pet. v. 3. ii. Tim. ii. 24, &c. Tit. iii. 1, &c.
 (b) Dan. xii. 3. i. Cor. xv. 41. 42. Jam. v. 20.

about the future blessedness of those committed to their care.

As such behaviour would amongst the lower class of people in particular be of singular use: so their poverty and want of education render them the most fit objects of compassion. For their time, if not worse employed, is almost totally engrossed in furnishing a supply for their corporal necessities; and their ignorance of the nature of their present state, and of that, which they are hereafter designed for, makes them thoughtless and indifferent concerning those momentous duties, which would greatly conduce to their happiness in both.

How laudable and christian therefore would it be, to diminish the number and weight of their bodily exigencies, in order to facilitate the success of that glorious design — *to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance*

ritance amongst them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus. (a)

SURELY that clergyman must have little considered, and laid to heart, the end of his ministry, who can sacrifice such noble and charitable views to the attainment of *filthy lucre*: (b) who chuses rather to be rich in worldly wealth, than in *these*—the best of works; (c) and seems to think the saving of money, of more consequence than the saving of souls.

MUCH to be lamented however it is, that the income of any should be so contracted, as not to permit them to purchase every possible help and furtherance of their sacred labours, by actions of a discreet and seasonable liberality: since the influence of such actions would at *all times* be felt, and by a prudent and pious management might be made greatly subservient to the purposes of religion:—But *especially* in the seasons of sickness and affliction; when the hope of receiving some temporal assistance, might not only induce the

(a) Acts, xxvi. 18. (b) i. Tim. iii. 3, 8. (c) — vi. 18, &c.

poor sufferer to request a visit from his spiritual guide; but when the contribution of it, would certainly tend to dispose his mind for the reception of any exhortation or comfort, he might judge proper to impart. So that an opportunity which was owing to a consideration respecting this world, might be improved into advantages for eternity: and *the man of God*, (a) whilst he was bestowing a trifling alms for the relief of the *body*, might convey an infinitely more valuable one for the relief of the *soul*; awakening the thoughtless illiterate to a sense of his spiritual wants; and setting him upon such exercises of recollection and devotion, as are necessary to establish his peace with God, and to recommend him to the divine mercy and felicity for ever.

BUT alas! the stipendiary clergy are in general so little able to extend their bounty to others, that they often themselves stand in need of it: and to increase their misfortune, labour under this peculiar un-

(a) ii. Tim: iii. 17.

happiness

happinefs—that whilst care and application will remove the wants of others, and accommodate them with a more plentiful supply; the most intense share they can exert, will, *as to these purposes*, be to them altogether insignificant. For let them labour however assiduously they may in their vocation—let them make their *study and their parish their sole employments*, and spend their whole time and attention in advancing the interest of religion, and the salvation of souls; their income after all, receives not a twelve-penny-piece augmentation: but whatever provision they may hereby be making for a *better state*, their provision for *this* remains unimproved.

THE lowest artificer, whenever he pleases, may reap the fruits of an extraordinary industry, in an addition to his common earnings; and if any disastrous occurrence befalls him, and is attended with more expence than his present acquisitions enable him to defray, he can, by a double diligence, recover the ground he has lost, and re-instate himself in the condition he

was

was in before. But the poor curate has no such resource — his diligence, with respect to this world, is of no avail: but whether he leads a single or a married life — has a small or a numerous family — enjoys an unintermitted health, or has many interruptions in it; his scanty allowance must carry him through every vicissitude to which he is liable; and he must sustain and struggle with the manifold difficulties and inconveniences, necessarily attendant upon his condition. And *these* will be rendered still the more insupportable, from a kind of necessity arising from the nature of his vocation, to make an appearance, by no means under his circumstances, easy to maintain. For if he will not sink into the utmost *neglect and contempt*, his own, and the dress of his family must be something suitable to the character he bears; and their manner of life from his education, and other considerations, I hope, it will not be deemed an arrogance to assert, should be a few removes from the very vulgar —
somewhat

somewhat bordering rather upon the genteel. But how all this is to be accomplished with means so inadequate, ye most frugal managers! ye who are conversant in all the rules of the best œconomy be so kind to impart!—So that the poor man must drag on an uncomfortable being; with a mind, instead of being disengaged as much as possible from all secular affairs, that he might be the more at liberty to attend to his spiritual employment, (*a*) harrassed and distracted with perplexity and care; labouring under evils, of which he can no more be insensible, than he knows how to remove: and the burthen of these increasing with time, as his *hopes* and *strength* grow languid and impair. And if through a number of years; or any accident or constitutional infirmity, he becomes incapable of longer service in his master's vineyard; he is turned upon the world destitute and helpless—deprived of all earthly succour, but that which is derived from the courtesy of the well dis-

(*a*) Luke, ix. 59, &c. ii. Tim. ii. 4.

posed few : and with this lowly and *uncertain* provision he must endeavour *in patience to possess his soul* ; (a) until it shall please that gracious Lord whose faithful servant he has been, to give him a dismissal from all his labours and sorrows together ; that he may, upon a fair estimate of what he has done, and what he has suffered, confer upon him a *full recompence in a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* (b) * This is a con-

(a) Luke, xxi. 19. (b) ii. Cor. iv. 17.

* I CANNOT upon this occasion but express my surprise, that no provision has been made by law, for clergymen so unfortunately circumstanced ;—and indeed for the widows and children of such ; who are too often left in a situation as *truly* deplorable as it is destitute : and who, it must be allowed, have as unexceptionable a claim to a favour and indulgence of this nature, as any other class of people amongst us ; as they have no opportunity of providing against such melancholy contingencies, as either an incapacity, or death may produce ; and have an employment in the community, in the discharge of which, I hope, they may be—and indeed are as useful as any other members in it. And whether or no, a provision for this purpose might have been made, by subjecting to annual contribution every *ecclesiastical benefice* in proportion to its revenue—I beg leave to submit to the consideration of the judicious and humane part of our legislature.

sideration

sideration indeed, which may buoy up his spirits and inspire him with a considerable degree of comfort, when all terrestrial comforts are withdrawn; and may enable him to proceed on his way, rugged as it is, secretly rejoicing; and at the close of it, from a like consciousness, and the same animating prospect with the apostle to declare; *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* (a)

It must however in the mean while be considered by every one in whom the sensibility of human nature, and all regard for the honour of religion, are not totally extinguished, as a case sincerely to be deplored;—that an honest and conscientious clergyman, should spend his *time* and *strength* in promoting the most sublime and durable happiness of his fellow-creature; and yet shall meet with a *worse re-*

(a) ii. Tim. iv. 7.

turn, and *much less present* recompence, than the men of any other vocation. In the list of professions, which are denominated liberal, *his* justly stands the foremost; and by universal consent is allowed to be the most honourable, as being an employment in the *immediate* service of the great God himself; *Who is the blessed, and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: (a)* but let his profession be stiled what it may, his treatment here, is not always the most respectful; and his chance for a moderate share of the good things of this life, far inferior to that of other men.

If a man makes any tolerable proficiency in the knowledge of physick, or the law, he is caressed as the guardian of our lives and properties; and is paid cheerfully the compliments of much respect and ample fees: but let the *man of God* furnish his head with a compleat system of divinity — let him be able to point out the method of cure under every spiritual

(a) i. Tim. vi. 15.

disorder,

disorder, and to ascertain its success—let him know how to prevent the evils which threaten the soul; and to secure its present peace, and final felicity—let him impart infallible directions for the attainment of an *inheritance*, not of a transient nature, but *incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven.* (a) Let him *speak with the tongue of men and of angels—be endued with the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries:* (b)—and let him be however willing and watchful in his charge. Yet all this, if he has not wealth either in possession or reversion, in relation to this world, like the want of charity in relation to a better, *will profit him nothing*;—will neither recommend him to *premiums* nor preferment: but if he is poor, he may remain so still; and may comfort himself with his *theological* portion,—the only portion in this life he is likely to obtain. If indeed he happens to be a man of a good private fortune (as sometimes such will accept

(a) i. Peter, i. 4. (b) i. Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

of a cure as an introduction into the church) or is connected with people who have *property or interest in their county*; either of these considerations may draw upon him a regard; and he may probably then be lucky enough to exchange his curacy for a rectory; which, without such circumstance all his parts and labour would not have procured him. *

INSTANCES,

* I AM very sensible, that there are men of parts, and well inclined to labour in their vocation, who are raised to lucrative stations in the church; but as I must believe, that it was not their ability and disposition to which they *entirely* owe their advancement; so must I, that there are many advanced who have no just pretensions to *either*, as well as others totally overlooked and neglected who have a considerable share of *both*. But this opinion, which probably may be offensive to some, who cannot but feel the force of truth; I shall confirm in the words of a much esteemed author; whose writings may convince the world, that as he had preferment, so had he merit to deserve it.

It is, says he, as well our duty in point of benevolence, though it be not so much in fashion, to encourage merit and ingenuity, as it is to relieve distress. Yet, though *men of merit* are often preferred; how few in comparison have been preferred *merely as men of merit* without any other consideration? Nay, perhaps it would be for the advantage of those, who are possessed of uncommon worth, to do as Moses did, when his face shone with heavenly glory, so that the Israelites could not stedfastly behold it;—viz to draw a veil

INSTANCES, it is possible, there may be; but I must declare, unknown to me; where an exemplary life, and conscientious discharge of parochial duty, have brought upon a man any distinguished notice, and been the *sole cause* of his call to advancement. These qualifications which ought to be principally adverted to, in the disposal of ecclesiastical promotions, are seldom considered at all: but a violent party zeal — an activity and influence in *parliamentary elections* — a relationship to the opulent and powerful — and sometimes considerations of such a nature as *dicere me vetat pudor*; will gain the favour of a patron — or of a person to solicit him; and will render his solicitation successful.*

THOUGH

over it, and to moderate that lustre, which is painful to most eyes, and insupportable to distempered ones. The bulk of mankind regard a man in proportion to what he is worth, the *only worth* that some seem to have any notion of.

Seed's Ser. Vol. 2. p. 349.

QUANTUM quisque sua numerum servat in arca,
Tantum habet et fidei: —

Juv.

* I SHOULD however be wanting in justice and gratitude to the generosity of my honoured patron Sir George Warren, did

THOUGH it cannot be denied, that was the behaviour of the clergy attended to, with a determined resolution to reward it according to its deserts—did the *best* parish priest stand the fairest chance for the *first* promotion; as reason and equity seem to give their suffrage that it should be: this would not only strongly induce them to improve and exert their talents, and to

did I not declare, that the small preferment of which I am now possessed, was *unsolicited* and unexpected conferred upon me by him: in which he could be actuated by no *other* view, but what the *natural goodness* of his own heart suggested—to make an addition to a *bare* salary of fifty pounds a year, which I then received for officiating in one of the *best* rectories in the kingdom: and which in his estimate was very unequal to the appearance I was in decency obliged to make, and to the expence of a family I had to support: and which in the estimate of every considerate man, must appear much too small for the constant labour and attendance *requisite* in that cure, if its offices are to be *properly* discharged; and as bearing no proportion to the income of the living.

—— Scilicet improbæ
Crescunt divitiæ: tamen
Curtæ nescio quid semper abest rei.

HOR.

Avidis, avidis, natura parum est.

SEN.

C 2

conduct

conduct themselves with an inculpable propriety and care; but would upon *these accounts* have a very happy effect upon religion in general, and upon the sentiments and manners of the rest of mankind.

It cannot therefore but appear very surprising, that this is not the constant practice of *one set of patrons in particular*: who by their *station* are under *especial* obligations to consult the credit and interest of religion; and by every method which providence has put into their power, to make its influence as strong and extensive as possible.

BUT they, alas! in these cases prove themselves *men of like passions with others*; and shew as little regard to considerations of this nature, as they do a readiness to oblige him, who either *personally*, or by *his friends*, may be supposed most able to return the obligation, and may become subservient to their views in compassing the *grand object* of their aim and ambition. Hereby giving too much occasion to *the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme* their order, and

and to conjecture that a Tran—n to H—n is not their most ardent wish. *

BUT besides the fore-mentioned inconveniences, which may arise to the unbeneficed clergy themselves from a scantiness of their stipend, and to the people with whom

* I CANNOT omit this opportunity of paying a just and grateful tribute, to the memory of that most venerable and pious prelate Dr. Martin Benson, late Bp. of Gloucester; who was not only an honor to the see in which Providence placed him, but to the episcopal order itself: being in his conduct as exemplary as an apostle, and as *blameless* as the infirmities of humanity will permit a man to be. My ordinations, which is a reflexion that always yields me pleasure, I received from him; and in his diocese I officiated nearly six years: and in all that time, with *delight* as well as *truth*, I declare it; I never heard his name mentioned but with the greatest respect, and highest encomiums upon his uncommon piety and virtues. Even they, who felt the weight of his reprehensions, (as no *dignity* nor *fortune* exempted an unclerical demeanour from them) through a consciousness of their justness, and the *impressive*, but *tender* manner in which they were given, found no cause but for commendation and gratitude: and they, in whom a propriety of behaviour might merit any share of his notice, *however humble their station in the church*, never missed the satisfaction which *that* might afford them. As he paid no regard *merely* to situations in life, and *did nothing by partiality*; the conduct of his clergy was the *only object* of his favour or displeasure; and his countenance was always and in *all places* towards them, according

whom they have an immediate concern; it has a manifest tendency to degrade the honour of the ministry, and to expose the church itself to danger, by the seduction and defection of its members.

IN the first establishment of christianity, when its publishers were empowered by miracles to confirm the truth of their doctrines; and by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, to confront and confound all opposers — *none being able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which they spake: (a)* nothing more could be necessary to entitle both their persons and opinions to the

ording to their care in the regulation of it: however prevalent riches and power might be with others, an attention to parochial duty, and a *conversation becoming the gospel of Christ*, were to his esteem and encouragement the *most certain* recommendations. — But then it is to be observed, that all his earthly views and ambition, *but of doing good*, were satisfied: — he had no favours to solicit — but from the *King of heaven*; and no removal, that he would accept or wished for, but that *last* — and *best* — into his beatitudes. Whereof, I doubt not, he has conferred upon him as distinguished a share, as he was distinguished here in the exercise of the whole catalogue of christian graces; of which a gracious God has constituted them, the eternal reward.

(a) Acts, vi. 10.

pro-

profoundest deference. And had not mankind been bound in the fetters of an indissoluble attachment to former persuasions; or laboured under an unconquerable prejudice to *some particulars* in the christian scheme; such an authentick commission from heaven as they bore, must have had an *universally* convincing influence upon their minds; and have made them, like *a multitude* of the first converts—*all of one heart and of one soul.* (a) The immediate communications with which they were favoured from above, rendered all human attainments *less* necessary:—and there was no possibility either of their being deceived themselves, or of their deceiving others; as they were under the *especial* care and super-intendency of that UNERRING DIRECTOR, *who was to guide them into all truth.* (b)

BUT when a regular system of christianity was formed, and, together with the proofs of its divine original, committed to writing by faithful witnesses; these supernatural testimonies and helps were with-

(a) Acts, iv. 32. (b) John, xvi. 17.

drawn; and men were left to the efforts of their own application and native abilities: a knowledge in christianity was then no longer *infused*, but was to be acquired; and a proficiency sufficient to qualify a man for a *teacher* in religion, was not to be made without much study and instruction. Nay, even amongst the first publishers of christianity, we find, that the supernatural assistances vouchsafed them, did not *totally* supersede the use of the natural means of information. Ananias was sent to St. Paul, not only by the imposition of his hands to restore to him his sight, and to confer upon him the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost; but probably likewise to instruct him in the nature and duties of that office, unto which he had just before been so wonderfully called: for when *trembling and astonished*, the late zealous and undaunted persecutor cried out, *Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?* The Lord said unto him, *arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* (a) *Aquila and*

(a) Acts, ix.

Priscilla bearing a certain Jew, named Apollos, speaking boldly in a synagogue at Ephesus the things of the Lord Jesus, (a) perceived, that, though he meant well, his knowledge was deficient, and therefore took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And we find this earnest injunction amongst many others of St. Paul to Timothy : — Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine — meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. (b)

AND if human means were in any sort necessary, properly to qualify those subjects for the preaching of the gospel, who were distinguished by extraordinary communications of the Holy Ghost ; much more may we infer the necessity of them now ; when we cannot justly pretend to any vouchsafements superior to his ordinary assistances ; and must not expect to make a progress in the true knowledge of christianity, but in proportion to the mea-

(a) Acts, xviii. 24

(b) i. Tim. xiv. 13, 15.

sure of our capacity, and to the means of information afforded us.

OUR Saviour indeed, to fortify the minds of his disciples, and to enable them with a becoming magnanimity to face those dangers, unto which, he foretold them, his ministry would expose them; gives them this animating promise. *When they shall lead you and deliver you up (to councils and tribunals) take no thought before-hand what you shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak you: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist.* (a) But those declarations are to be understood as peculiar to those times; and are no more to be depended upon in this our age, than his assurance concerning *those signs*, which he affirmed *should follow them that believed*;—that they should *not only cast out devils; speak with new tongues; and by laying on of their hands recover the sick: but that they might take up*

(a) Mark, xiii. 11. Luke, xii. 25.

serpents; and if they should drink any deadly thing it should not hurt them. (a) — An experiment, of which, if any man should be imprudent enough to make it, his life, I doubt not, would prove the forfeit; and too late convince him of his too credulous and undistinguishing temerity.

AND miraculous *effusions* are no more to be expected, than miraculous *interpositions*: God Almighty having sufficiently evidenced the truth of the mission and doctrines of his Son, by incontestible demonstrations of his omnipotent power; and these it is the business of reason to examine with a proper attention and impartiality. — All mental darkness and doubts must then be dispelled, like the shades of night at the glorious approach of day.

AND upon these considerations it is, that seminaries of learning have been every where founded, and liberally endowed, to encourage men following literature, to resort to and take up their residence in them; that those who were desiged for the service of the church, might, by repairing

(a) Mark, xvi. 17, 18.

thither receive such a share of erudition, as might duly fit them for the discharge of their office. And for this purpose, we have in our own kingdom two of the most FAMOUS UNIVERSITIES IN THE WORLD; which consist of an assemblage of colleges and halls; filled *in general* with a succession of learned and good men; whom the beneficence of princes, and other great personages have decently supported in this retirement, that they may enjoy the more leisure to pursue their studies, and so be most capable of answering the end of such institutions.

THESE universities have been sometimes called the *eyes of the nation*: no doubt, because from them is derived that *intellectual sight*, which enables us to penetrate through those clouds of darkness in which oftentimes truth is involved; and clearly to distinguish what God has written, both in his book of nature, and in his book of grace. And men who have made the farthest discoveries in *both*, owe much of their ability to the advantages they have *here* received: as they have been instructed
not

not only in the knowledge of letters, but in the true method of reasoning; and could therefore both argue with justness and propriety themselves, and prevent every imposition upon their understanding, from the false quotations and sophistry of subtle and designing men.

THERE may possibly be some examples of men produced, who, by the dint of good natural parts — a close application, and the aid and directions of a skilful private tutor, may have made a notable progress in literature; and have attained to such a degree of knowledge, as was sufficient to qualify them to fill any station with honor, whether ecclesiastical or civil.

BUT admitting this to be so: — from a few particular cases, nothing can be concluded to the prejudice of a general practice: especially when, I hope, it will not be denied, that the same persons — with the same genius and disposition, might in either of our universities have made *at least* an equal proficiency: — and that numbers without the advantages there received, would never have appeared in that respectable

tible light, in which the world had reason to view them.

It is possible, that a man, by reading and meditation, and a serious and constant exercise of a solitary devotion, may, without any attendance upon *publick worship*, entertain the most exalted notions of the Deity, and may rise to an uncommon height of piety and purity: but from any such instance it would be very unwarrantable to infer the inutility of such an appointment: since it is most wisely and mercifully contrived and commanded, as the *best* expedient to set forth the glory of the Creator and Governor of the world; and to keep alive in our breasts, a sense of the duties and obligations we owe him; and which if joined in, with a suitable intenseness and frame of mind, would be productive of the greatest blessings, and spiritual improvements. And besides from this source too is chiefly derived (not unlike learning from our universities) all that spirit which animates the religious world, and preserves from oblivion those *poor remains* of reverence we now express to an
over-

over-ruling Providence ; and which there is all imaginable reason to believe, would in a short time be utterly extinguished, was that custom once universal, which, God knows, is already too common—*the forsaking the assembling ourselves together.* (a)

I AM not forgetful of the observation that is sometimes made to the disparagement of our universities—that many after having spent a considerable share of their time and money there, return to their friends with little or no improvement ; and are so far from excelling *all those* who have not enjoyed the same opportunities, that they are much inferior to *some of* them ; both in their publick and private capacity—in the pulpit and in their conversation.

THIS may readily be allowed, without the least imputation upon those learned bodies. For it is not pretended, that *all* the members initiated there, are endued with good natural abilities, or equally inclined to study and application : and though they have power to make a bad

(a) Heb. x. 25.

genius something better, and to give a fine one all the lustre which learning can bestow; they cannot impart a capacity where nature has denied it, nor prevent the melancholy effects of supineness and inattention.

THE man, who has *not faculties* to discern the beauties and benefits of holiness;—or has no *inclination* to embrace the means of grace and glory, which we, in this happy land of religious, as well as civil liberty, do *freely* and *fully* enjoy; whilst many are making great progress in christianity, and towards heaven; may be as ignorant as an heathen of the principles and privileges of his religion; and may die, either much to be pitied for his want of capacity—or much to be punished for his neglect to improve it.

AND so he who has a natural inaptitude for erudition;—or will not take any pains to polish and brighten the parts bestowed upon him; but chuses rather to hide his *talent* to rust or rot in the earth; must, wherever it is his lot to be brought up, cut in life a contemptible figure: and
whatever

whatever a kind Providence may do for him in *birth* or in *fortune* to give him a significance; these exteriors will not conceal his internal defects from the discernment of men of letters; who will penetrate below the superficies, and discover his weakness though laid thick over with gold, or elevated by the undistinguishing hand of preferment into the seat of power. *The rich man*, says Solomon, *is wise in his own conceit, but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.* (a)

AND without all doubt; notwithstanding there may be suggested by those, who either know nothing of the matter, or wish to depreciate advantages, which themselves have not had either opportunity, or the prudence to obtain, many things to the disreputation of our universities; as they were originally designed, so are they judiciously calculated for the improvement of men capable and disposed to receive it: and to contradict this, is to censure the wisdom and practice of the present and former ages; and to shut our eyes against the many demonstrations which are yearly pro-

(a) PROV. xxviii. 11.

duced, by eminent men both in church and state: who have the gratitude to acknowledge that their mental growth and strength have been principally derived, from the salutary and seasonable nutrition, administered to them by their *indulgent mothers*.

AND, such is the regard which our church pays to the judgment and merits of our universities; that in many places, by *particular charter*, all those are excluded from her preferments who have never been under their tuition and care; and cannot produce a testimony of their avowal of their good behaviour and improvement in a certain degree* conferred upon them. Upon this presumption—that, whatever others may be, they cannot be supposed unqualified for the pro-

* What is meant by a degree, those who know any thing of an Oxford, or Cambridge education, need not be told. But for the information of others, I shall beg leave to observe, that when a scholar has resided such a number of years in either of our universities, and has performed such exercises as are required within that term; as a testimony of his proficiency in arts and faculties, he has a quality conferred upon him, which is called a degree—of bachelor, or master of arts—or of bachelor, or Dr. in divinity: which is always esteemed a badge of honour; and entitles the wearer of it, to privileges, precedencies, &c. not only in the universities, but throughout the kingdom.

motio

motion for which they stand candidates, who come with such a publick mark of approbation from such an unquestionable judge. Which is a means at once to preserve the honour and respect which are justly due to our universities; and to reward and stimulate men, to acquire such a share of learning, as they who bring this seal, may, in equitable construction, be supposed to have. And upon these considerations graduates are distinguished in our canons by particular indulgencies,* and admitted to several peculiar privileges of dignity and emolument, unto which no others in holy orders stand entitled.

A PLAIN proof of the honourable sentiments which our church entertains of our universities; and how desirous she is, that *all* who are intended for her service, may come through their hands.

AND, in this matter, she certainly judges very well:—and well would it be, if it was as she judges. But the case, God knows, is very far otherwise; and much to be lamented it is; as it sinks the ministry into disesteem; which like Jeroboam's idolatry,(a)

* Can. 40. 127. 128. (a) i. Kings, xii. 31. i. — xiii. 33.

is filled with priests of the lowest of the people: for whosoever will *almost*, is consecrated; and he becomes one of the priests—and sometimes too—to increase our astonishment and indignation—of the high places.

WHAT mean notions must the laity entertain of the qualifications requisite for the ministry, when they see such admitted into it? And what encouragement must it be for men to set up for teachers, in any way their *pride* or *enthusiasm* may prompt them; when they perceive others authorized to be so; whose abilities they know to be, if at all, very little superior to their own?

BUT I am not unaware, that, as an excuse for *this*, necessity will be pleaded; since without the admission of such, very many places of public worship would be unsupplied; and the several inhabitants left in a dark and forlorn condition—destitute of all spiritual help, and evangelical illumination.

AND that this necessity is not merely pretended, I *verily* believe;—and that it will not only continue, but daily increase;—whilst so little encouragement as at present, is given to a regular and academical education; for
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the expence unavoidably attending it, must be esteemed by people in middling-life very considerable—several hundred pounds, though frugally managed, being requisite to defray it: which is a larger sum than men of slender fortunes, or not extraordinary earnings, would chuse to part with, for the satisfaction of seeing their son placed in a state of servility and dependence—sometimes little above the level of a genteel beggar.

WHEN zeal for religion was much warmer than it is, many well-meaning parents might struggle hard to dedicate a favourite child *in this way* to God;—thinking his fortune profitably expended in purchasing the honor and blessings of *his* ministry: they might fondly imagine that this was the surest step they could take to recommend *him*, and perhaps *themselves*—to the Divine Favour: and as for the temporal inconveniences attending his condition, they either were not much considered, or judged to be overbalanced by the spiritual advantages, that would hence accrue to him.

BUT in our age of the world, whatever men may be for *another* state, they are wise and provident enough for *this*; and seem not

disposed for the sake of any prospects beyond the grave, to forego those which offer themselves to their present view; but forecast to fix their sons in those stations in life, in which, it is most likely, they will be *best* able to procure a decent, and comfortable subsistence;—with a rational persuasion, that whilst they behave with probity and propriety, no diminution of an hereafter felicity need to be apprehended.

AND so long as this is the case, very few, besides those who have family livings to enjoy—or have a *moral* certainty of being handsomely provided for in the church, will be regularly brought up for it:—to have their fortunes laid out, to put them into a capacity only to enter, it may be, into a laborious servitude:—thereby to acquire little more *annually* than their money, *without sinking the principal*, would at common interest have made them:—and which, *if sunk*, would have purchased an *annuity for life*, much better than any, unto which their labours may entitle them.

AN intelligent and active tradesman, with four or five hundred pounds to second and assist his industry and care, may in a few years *double* his

his original capital; and by an assiduous attention to his business, be continually augmenting his ability, and bringing in large accessions of wealth: and not any thing through all his negotiations, shall be undertaken, that is inconsistent with an unblemished reputation, or an unspotted conscience: but as he is not wanting in his endeavours to make a provision for *the life to come*, as well as for *that which now is*, he shall obtain in *both* an ample share of good: and like an honest man, and a sincere christian, he shall live in the favour of his fellow-creature, and die in the favour of his great Creator.

BUT the stipendary curate, after having expended his fortune, to lay in a stock of learning, to qualify him for his future vocation, is obliged to retail it, at a *very low price*: the articles in which he deals, *though of the highest value in themselves*, through a false notion which too great a part of mankind have fatally imbibed, are but in little request and estimation:—they having been long *unfashionable and in disuse*; and the prevailing taste being for decorations of a quite different nature. Infomuch that the poor man pursues

a calling, with much expence of thought and care, which makes him but slender returns in respect, and yet slenderer in gain : and has bestowed upon the world his fortune and his labours without an equivalent—and much less, any remuneration—save *that*, which I trust, he may expect in another state, at the hands of God.

THESE things are too obvious to escape the eyes of the least observant—and too affecting, not to impress their minds : and the detrimental consequence of them to our church, is visible enough. For let any man who has either curiosity, or concern to be satisfied in this affair, make an enquiry in our most populous towns and public schools ; and he will find the number of youths intended for the universities in order to fit them for the pulpit, to be very small. * And if he shall remonstrate to those, who have the

* In one of the largest and most populous towns in Cheshire, where I resided near twenty years, there was not from it, nor any part of its neighbourhood in all that time, nor in many years before, one boy sent to and regularly educated in either of our universities with design to fit him for the service of the church : though there were several, who went there to receive an education as gentlemen ; and to qualify them for the farther study and practise of physick and the law.

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management and disposal of them;—that divinity is the most sublime study—the clericate the noblest order—the ministry the most honourable employment—and the saving of souls the most charitable work—the reason assigned by them *all* shall be pretty nearly the same, viz. that they have no probability of getting any thing better than a curacy; and that the income of *that*, is a very inadequate return for the expence of a regular education for it—that they know how to lay out their money more judiciously; and can fix their children in professions or occupations, by which they shall be enabled to live with comfort here—without running any uncommon risque of losing their comfort hereafter.

THESE are truths, which, however we may regret, cannot be denied. Which made me wonder some years ago, to hear a s—t Rev. B—p in his v—t—n ch—ge, when almost surrounded with his non-graduate clergy; and some of them too, *miserable* *vifit*, in possession of some of the best benefices in his d—e, expressing his surprise at the paucity of those, who had been academically trained up; and encouraging his lay-auditors

ditors to increase the number:—but, if I remember right, without once taking notice of that *grand objection*, which has deterred many, and will deter many more, from listening to any such advice: and which, unless it is removed, will render it as impossible for his l——p's eloquence to prevail in this point; as it is, to persuade men to forsake all that they have to *follow* Christ; and with the disinterestedness of an apostle, to embrace *distress* and *poverty* for the sake of the gospel.

✕ If there was a fair prospect of a comfortable provision in the church — if men in general could live in the ministry with the same satisfaction and *independence* as in other professions; the vocation in itself is so reputable, that there never would be wanting a sufficiency of fit and able men *to wait at the altar*: for in this, as well as in natural cases, *sublata causa, tollitur effectus.*

BUT as things are now circumstanced, to speak reasonably, it cannot be expected. For I do not see, how any man is justly to be blamed, for looking after the most *probable means* of happiness for his son, and suffering his choice to be determined by those, which

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to him appear to be so : and if in this search, the church happens to be overlooked, as it certainly *is*, and *will*; the fault seems *only* in those, who have it in their power to redress that grievance, which is the cause of such preterition.

AND to whom for assistance and protection she, sensible of the necessity of their speedy interposition, extends her *feeble arms*, that she may recover her fading glory, and not be permitted to fall into *utter* contempt and ruin. Her enemies perceive and rejoice at her *increasing* weakness, and find it more easy to seduce out of her bosom her members daily : — men of erudition and good understanding will hold her in less estimation : — and the lower sort of people will be ready to conclude, that it is a matter of little consequence by *whom*, or *where* they are instructed in their duty, if there is no other difference amongst their instructors, but what arises from the episcopal imposition of hands. They will therefore be apt to run into sectaries and schisms ; — *to be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of strange doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness where-*
by

by they lie in wait to deceive: (a) and will be apt to esteem him the best guide, who has the largest share of vanity and assurance.

AND is it not a consideration of a very deplorable nature; that our church, which in her doctrines is pure and scriptural, and has always been considered as the principal defence and bulwark of the protestant religion, should, for want of a reasonable encouragement to her clergy, be permitted to languish and decay—to become an object of scorn and derision to the libertines about her—and of an unfeigned sorrow to those who cordially wish her welfare?—If a remedy can be investigated to heal her wound, and to re-establish her *health* and *vigour*, it is highly necessary it should be applied; with whatever pains and difficulty the application may be attended.

AND for this purpose, she solicits no *new* revenues—no additional emoluments,—being well satisfied and thankful for that provision, which the wisdom and piety of former times have devoted to her support—but only a

(a) Eph. iv. 14.

more equitable distribution of *those* already in her possession.

AND if there is a provision made for the clergy, why should they not *all* partake of it in a reasonable measure? They are restrained by canon from every *secular* employment; and yet are not allowed a competency in their ecclesiastical one: they are enjoined to give themselves *wholly* to the discharge of their sacred office—to attend upon the *altar*, and to *preach the gospel*; (a) when, contrary to what the *Lord himself* hath ordained, they cannot *live of the gospel*. (b) Those, who are most assiduous in their vocation, and *sell* most liberally their *spiritual things*, reap the least portion of their hearers *carnal things*: these are claimed and carried off by another person, who, it may be, has shewn little, or no concern for their souls—nor for any thing else, except their tithe: and probably would not have thought his parishioners worth his least external notice, or the labour of *even an annual visit*, had it not been in order to collect, or to receive the rents of, them.

CAN any man, who dispassionately consults his reason, think *this* an equitable pro-

(a) i. Tim. iv. 15.

(b) i. Cor ix. 14.

cedure? Or, if with the least degree of common sense he peruses his bible, can he judge it agreeable to the will and commands of God?—That the most sedulous labourer—the workman who has approved himself most worthy of his meat, (a) should be left to starve—that he who planteth a vineyard, should not eat of the fruit thereof—or that he who feedeth a flock, should not himself be fed with the milk of that flock. (b) But that others, who have been appointed shepherds, and taken upon them too the charge of the flock, should eat the fat and clothe themselves with the wool; (c) although they have not expressed the least care and solicitude for their salvation. Few, or none of the offices of a faithful and true pastor have they performed—the diseased have they not strengthened—neither have they healed that which was sick—neither have they bound up that which was broken—neither have they brought again that which was driven away—neither have they sought that which was lost—but with force and with cruelty have they ruled them:—exacting with the utmost rigour what the laws of the land empower them to de-

(a) Mat. x. 10.

(b) i. Cor. ix. 7.

(c) Ezek. xxxiv.
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mand, without any regard, as *to the deserving, or application of it*, either to the laws of conscience, or to the laws of the gospel.

BUT however such may screen themselves under the covert of a civil authority, there is a future and severe examination, which they are sure to undergo: when the great and good shepherd, who has laid down his life for the sheep *(a)*—who knew the immense value of those immortal souls, which these thieves and robbers fly away from, and care not for; *(b)* will call them to a strict account of what they have done, and what they have received. *For thus saith the Lord God, behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hands. (c)*

A CONSIDERATION sufficient to alarm the fears of every negligent and avaritious pastor, in whose breast is not extinguished all belief of the divine original of the Holy Scriptures;—or, that the author of them, will at any time fulfil his word.

WELL may the sacred vocation be stigmatized with the odious appellation of a *trade*, when so little regard is paid to the pious in-

(a) John, x. 4. *(b)* — Ver. 8. *(c)* Ezek. xxxiv. 10.

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tendment of it---when it seems to be the principal, if not the *sole* aim of many who enter into it, not to make others good, but themselves great:—who spend their days and labour in adding pounds to pounds, and *field to field*;—whose enquiries are directed more after a *profitable purchase, and good securities* for their money, than either after the joys of heaven, or the road that leads that way;—and who discover more anxiety to prevent any diminution or *loss* in their wealth, than the loss either of their *own*, or of the souls of any of their people.

THEY ought indeed to sit as loose, and to be as much disengaged as possible, from *this world*; as their hearts and *conversation* should be chiefly in *another*; (a) and when they will condescend to preach, they can with *strict truth* assure their congregations of the necessity of *this*—and of a great deal more: but was a judgment to be formed *from their behaviour*, one would be apt to conclude, that their duty terminated in the pulpit; and that the obligation to practise did not extend to the priesthood, but was valid and bind-

(a) Phil. iii. 20.

ing to the laity only. For so far from being always patterns of religion and virtue to them, that they are by many of them not seldom exceeded in *both*: who are an *example* and reproach to *those*, who ought to go before them in a *punctuality* and *fervency* in devotion, as well as in the exercise of every branch of beneficence and charity; and are inferior to them only in those things, wherein a christian—and much more a christian priest, should be both ashamed and afraid to excel—an *extreme narrowness of mind*, and a *violent attachment to the world*.

BUT if men of the most sacred character, can overlook their most solemn obligations, and prostitute *conscience* for the sake of *gain*; it would be a work greatly redounding to the honor of God, and the increase of religion; that supreme authority, in whose hands the power is lodged; would lessen the temptation; and reward with a more suitable portion, the assiduity of the faithful labourer. Was the income of the rector, &c. diminished, and *that* of the curate augmented; the one would not be so overwhelmed with riches and pride; nor the *other* with poverty and

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contempt : the *former* might not then think it below him to attend to parochial duty ; nor the *latter* be destitute of a recompence for his pains and fidelity in it. There might still be difference enough betwixt them in point of worldly advantage, without being so much as there is at present : when the allowance of a stipendiary in most places is not a maintenance, and bears *no sort of proportion* to the emolument of the benefice.

AND this allowance, mean as it is, must not be expected to improve, whilst it is assigned by those who have so material an interest in it. For notwithstanding there is a power invested by act of parliament * in

* MADE in the twelfth year of the reign of the late Queen Anne, Cap. 12, entitled an act for the better maintenance of curates within the church of England ; and for preventing any ecclesiastical persons from buying the next avoidance of any church preferment. And the episcopal power in the statute is so plain and undeniable, as not to admit of the least doubt or dispute.—Take it as it is expressed in the words, of the act “ And if it shall appear to bishop or ordinary, upon complaint *otherwise*, that any curate of such rector or vicar licensed, &c. hath not a *sufficient* maintenance ; it shall be lawful to, and for the said bishop, &c. to appoint him a certain stipend or allowance ; and in case any difference shall arise between any rector or vicar and his curate, touching such stipend or allowance, or the payment

the hands of our B—ps to fix the salary of curates according to their discretion and the circumstances of the living—not under twenty pounds nor exceeding fifty pounds per annum;—this is a power which may not always be exerted: and if the diocesans *for reasons of their own*, should, through a desire to be upon the most friendly terms with the rich incumbents, decline as much as possible all interposal in matters of so tender and inflammatory a nature; the poor curate may lie too much exposed to the mercy of a man haughty and perhaps avaritious; who may consider the church, as his patrimony, and his assistant, as his vassal and dependent; and may think any appointment upon which he can *barely* subsist, very sufficient for the best services he can repay.

SURELY by every mind that is not blinded with prejudice or interest, such usage must be condemned as ungenerous and cruel—

ment thereof; the bishop on complaint to him made, shall summarily hear and determine the same; and in case of neglect or refusal to pay such stipend or allowance may *(not suffer the poor curate to be discharged from his curacy, but)* sequester the profits of such benefice for, or until payment be made." STATUTES AT LARGE.

the hardships sustained by it, will be sensibly participated, where humanity is not totally extinguished—and, whoever has the honor of God, and the prosperity of religion, sincerely at heart; will zealously wish and *strive* for the removal of a grievance, which must necessarily be productive of the worst consequences to both.

WITH all submission therefore I beg leave to make a proposal to our most honoured and wise *legislature*, in the name, I may venture to say, of all the people in the kingdom, whose dislike to it is not easily accounted for, from their own private views—whether it may not be proper to have the salaries of stipendiary curates fixed by law, independent of the will of those they are to assist—and in such a manner as shall bear *some proportion* to the income of the living and the nature of the duty—and as the circumstances of the times seem now to require.

THAT the legislative power has heretofore interfered in this matter, the act of parliament I have just now mentioned fully proves: and what was then enacted, had those, to whose discretion the executive

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part was committed, made a full use of their liberty for the benefit of the objects of that act, would probably have prevented the complaints from being so general.

BUT the years which have revolved since that period, have produced many alterations; insomuch that it is as necessary to re-consider and amend that law, if it is to answer any useful purpose; and to adapt it to the circumstances of the present times; as it was to frame it at first. For the price of all kind of provisions is so much augmented—dress and the manner of living so different from the taste of that generation—house rent, and domestick expences in *every article*, so much increased; that, I dare say, I shall not be thought to exceed, when I affirm, that fifty pounds a year would *then* be as comfortable an accommodation, as an hundred pounds will *now*: and that a curate who had at *that season* a stipend of thirty or forty pounds, would support at least as decent an appearance, as he, who, with the same family in this, has one of sixty or eighty pounds.

SUCH is the peculiar hardship of a limited income,

income, that, notwithstanding it may be sufficient at the time it is appointed; every advance upon the necessities of life, will be equal to a reduction of it; and consequently introductory to some kind of inconveniency; and by degrees, if this advance is progressive, and rises still higher, no frugality can ward off the attendant evils, but absolute distress must inevitably ensue.

THIS has been the unfortunate case of that order of people, for whom, it would afford me an inexpressible satisfaction, to be a successful advocate. They have been tied down pretty nearly, *to the same scanty salary*, through the course of more than fifty years; and, notwithstanding so many vicissitudes have happened, to render the expences of house-keeping doubly great, no attention has been paid to this: as if their little substance, like the widow's *barrel of meal and cruse of oil*, (a) was incapable of diminution: or, like their great master, they could miraculously multiply *loaves and fishes*, for the sustenance of themselves and families.

AND all this while, the income of the in-

(a) i. Kings, xvii. 16.

cumbent *has been keeping pace* with the advancing price of other things : for as the products of the earth have increased in value, an improvement in the same degree must his living receive—the *tenth* part being an equivalent to any of the other *nine* : so that whatever addition in the price of things tithable may be demanded by the land-holder, a proportionable addition will fall to the parson's share. Insomuch, that through this cause, and perhaps a greater quantity of land than heretofore being converted into arable ; the tithe of some townships in the parish wherein I resided, sets at this time for *double* the money it used to make forty or fifty years ago : then, as I have been credibly informed, *that* which would have been rented for thirty or thirty-six pounds a year, at this present day, takes more than sixty, or seventy pounds. Not now to mention the advanced rent upon all lands in general, which must profitably effect the income of incumbents every where — as the produce of them must advance *at least* in the same degree. And besides, I presume, this advance will be found by the occupiers of the parson's

glebe, *no less* than by the tenants of other gentlemen.

So that these changes in the price of the necessaries of life, have produced no alteration, but for the better, to the owner of the tithe; though the consequence of them to the curate has been of a quite different nature: they have been an advantage to the one, but a detriment to the other;—adding riches to the wealthy, whilst they have immersed the poor more deeply in his distress.

BOTH which effects, are probably contrary to the intent of the legislature:—However, from its acknowledged humanity and goodness in taking into consideration the case of curates, the latter, I think, may fairly be pronounced to be so. For with what view, can we else suppose, they would turn their attention to this matter, unless to secure a comfortable maintenance for the unbeneficed part of the clergy? — By rescuing them from the arbitrary will of those, whose regard for their own interest, might prevail upon them to deal unkindly with their brethren; and putting them into the hands, as it were, of the *common father* of them all; who,

who, *without preferring one before another, or doing any thing by partiality*; (a) it might reasonably be supposed, would, as far as the license to him committed, did extend, be a most *upright dispenser* of the revenues of the church amongst all its sons.

WITH what fidelity this trust has been executed, they, with whom it has been lodged, best know: their consciences can inform them, how far their determinations have been influenced by *worldly considerations* and *respect* to men; or by a sincere judgment of what was equitable and right. If they have been actuated by a fear of God, more than by a fear of men; let their integrity be recorded and rewarded in heaven! — But if, *when they saw their help in the gate, they have lifted up their hands against* (b) * the defenceless, or concurred with the opulent to oppress him: — if they have despised the cause of those, who, relying upon their justice, submitted the decision of it to them, when redress was in their power: well may

(a) i. Tim. v. 21. (b) Job. xxxi. 21.

* Qui capit, ille facit: et qui fecit, capere oportet. they,

they, in an awful apprehension of the supreme Judge, put these interrogatories of holy Job home to themselves;—*what shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?*

SUCH proceeding is not only repugnant to all the laws of humanity and equity, but indicates a contemptible pusillanimity; and is a betraying of that *confidence* and *trust*, which the wisdom of the government, from their sacerdotal connexions, and the sanctity of their order, thought, with the least danger of abuse, might be reposed in them.

BUT however this power may have been exerted, it is plain, as the law and circumstances of things now stand, that it is much too limited; and calls aloud for a speedy enlargement.

THOUGH probably if the legislature would be kind enough to interpose; the most certain and effectual method to secure a *becoming* and *sufficient* salary for the curates, would be, not to leave them to the mercy of the incumbent—or to their interest with the diocesan; but to fix it in an *absolute* and *independent* manner.—That every clergyman
who

who either undertakes the whole duty of a curate for another, or is appointed his assistant in the discharge of it; shall, immediately upon his being licensed to the same, be entitled by act of parliament to such a stipend, as from the greatness of the cure, and the value of the living, shall be judged fit and reasonable:—that where the benefice is of such a value, the salary of the curate shall be settled accordingly—the latter bearing some kind of proportion to the former: especially as it may well be presumed, that where the benefice is the most lucrative, the parish is the most populous, and extensive; and consequently the duty to be performed must require a larger share of labour and attention.

In a neighbouring kingdom, the plan upon which they proceed with regard to a provision for their clergy, seems not only much more equitable, but much more conducive to the credit and propagation of religion, than our own. The revenues of the church are more equally divided—every man, as far as they will extend, having a *sufficiency*, and no man having a *redundancy*: none are permitted in idleness to live upon *that hire* for which

which others labour; but every pastor must superintend his own flock: or, if too large for his single management, jointly partake with some other shepherd in the care and solicitude attending it. By this means, the teachers of religion keep it in countenance, and give it a strong recommendation: it appears with an air of truth and importance; and, when set off by a constant attention to those duties which are inculcated upon others, will be most likely to make impressions upon the minds of the people, both lively and lasting.

—AND very probably it is owing to this cause, that religion in this country is more venerated, and its precepts in general better observed, than in our own. For it is the common opinion of all who have visited, and made remarks of this nature in it; that there is a far more pious regard paid to the sabbatical institution and to publick worship—that there is much less profaneness—less ebriety—less incontinency—and less immorality in general, than amongst ourselves. And to what shall we ascribe this superiority in goodness, and this inferiority in evil?

Shall

Shall we say, that the doctrines of Christ are not so well understood here, as there? or dare we affirm, that our teachers are not so capable, and so well qualified for their vocation as those amongst them?—These things, I suppose, if asserted, would be thought very affrontive; and be peremptorily denied by our clergy; who, in all likelihood, would take greater offence at *this*, than at pointing out the true cause;—though it is *indeed* a more *shameful reflexion* upon them, than their want of ability can be.

THE ministers of the Scottish church, reside upon their cures, and attend with assiduity to the business of their calling: they seem to think religion a matter of the utmost importance; and the saving of souls, an employment, in which not only all negligence must be hurtful and inexcusable; but a continual vigilance and assiduity necessary to render it successful. Upon which account, the people are disposed to think *highly* both of their instructor, and of his instructions; and to infer *from what he does*, that he must be in *earnest* in what he says: and are therefore more easily prevailed upon to entertain a
serious

a serious belief, that the duties of their religion are—not devised by mercenary priests, and artful politicians—but enjoined by God himself: and are as conducive to their true felicity in an eternal state, as their minister and the gospel, represent them to be.

BUT the case with us, and the consequence too, God knows, are much the reverse. For after all that has been offered, concerning the decay and disregard of religion amongst ourselves, it has long been my persuasion, that the greatest enemies to it, are those who ought to be its greatest friends:—they who eat of its bread, lift up their heel against it; (a) and whilst, like Judas, they follow Christ, in the crowd of his disciples; like him, they betray him into the hands of his adversaries—to contempt—to contumely—to wounds—and to death.

IT is always observed, that an *hypocritical professor*, when his disguise is perspicuous, is more detrimental to the cause of godliness, than a *libertine*, or a *blasphemer*. For if such act contrary to the dictates of their religion, they are supposed to be ignorant of its beau-

(a) John. xiii. 18.

ties, and of their obligations to a different practice: and their dislike to it, may be easily accounted for, from its repugnancy to their propensities, and from its being calculated to impose a restraint upon those irregular passions and appetites, which they are the most fond of, and determined to indulge. So that whatever disgrace such bring upon themselves, they can bring none upon religion; since, *as from avowed enemies*, nothing in its favour is expected from that quarter.

BUT when men have made it the object of their choice, and have studied its excellencies, and are become sensible of them:—when they can descant upon the advantages repaying a faithful attention to it; and upon the danger and dreadful consequences of living in the neglect of it: and yet all this, shall be found to be nothing else but *talk* and *pretence*—as its main and most important duties shall in the tenour of their lives be overlooked; or as frequently sacrificed as *interest* or *pleasure* shall make the demand:—Religion from such disingenuous votaries will suffer in the esteem of mankind; who will be apt to conclude, when they see so
little

little good *from* it, that there is little *real* good in it; and that whatever may be the end which such false devotees may propose; the expedient they make use of, however sacred and venerable they may wish it to appear, is nothing more than an *artful device* to accomplish it. Many therefore from such an *abuse* of religion, will be disgusted at *all* religion; and will carry their disgust so far, as not only to suspect the most deceit, where there is the most *seeming* sanctity; but to be afraid themselves to assume any such appearance, from an apprehension of incurring the like suspicion.

AND with great reason it is to be feared, that the unevangelical behaviour and manners of many of our CLERGY, have aided more effectually the cause of *infidelity* and *immorality*; and have given religion more *deep* and *dangerous* wounds, than all its open and declared enemies have been able to do. For whatever has by the most virulent pens been alledged against it, either to weaken its credibility, or to disparage its blessed author; has been so *fully* and *satisfactorily* refuted, that no unprejudiced mind could receive any injury

injury from thence; but must rather find matter for rejoicing to see the *glorious triumph of truth*, and the keenest efforts of malice and vice so shamefully defeated.

BUT when professing friends carry on, as it were, a secret correspondence with, and clandestinely assist, the enemy—when wearing the livery of Christ, they act as the servants of satan and sin:—what opinion must an observant spectator entertain of their *real* sentiments?—* That though in *garb* and *words* they proclaim religion, in *heart* and *actions* they oppose its success: and that were

* A CERTAIN author writes to this purpose, “if a soldier, who had taken the oath to Cæsar, should run over to the enemy, and serve him against Cæsar, and after that be taken; would he not be punished as a deserter and a perjured villain? and if he should plead for himself, that he never denied Cæsar; would it not be answered,—*that with his tongue he did not deny him; but with his actions (or by facts) he did.*”

AND in another place, “let us,” says he, “suppose some tyrant command a christian to burn incense to Jupiter, without adding any thing of a verbal abnegation of Christ: if a christian should do this, would it not be manifest to all, that by that very act he denied him?”

Woollaston's Relig. of Nat. del. p. 11.

Sic non ipso honesto movemur, ut boni viri simus, sed ut illic aliquâ aut fructu; callidi sumus, non boni. *Cic. de leg.*

Da mihi fallere; da justum, sanctumque videri:

Noctem peccatis, et fraudibus objice nubem.

HOR.

F

they

they not bribed to a continuance in its service by the many secular benefits resulting from it; they would desert its cause, and publicly declare for the enemy.

WHETHER such an opinion may be *rightly* founded, I cannot with certainty pronounce; but that from an inconsistent conduct in those who have taken upon them the sacred calling, many will, and do so judge, I am very certain. Appearances will always have great weight in determining our judgments: and fine speeches and protestations signify little, in opposition to the evidences of our senses.

AND beyond all doubt it is, that the truth may more effectually be contradicted by *actions* than by *words*: * and as we should not scruple to condemn that man as an enemy whose ill-offices and malevolence we have frequently experienced, whatever professions of amity or affection he might make; f

* WHOEVER acts as if things were so, or not so, doth by his acts declare that they are so, or not so; as plainly as he could by words and with *more reality*. And if the things are otherwise his acts contradict those propositions which assert them to be as they are.

Woolaston, p. 13.

If we say, that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness; we *lie and do not the truth*. i. John. i. 6.

our belief, or disbelief of the necessity of observing the gospel-precepts will be more rationally infered from the tenor of our conduct, than from ten thousand declarations.

SUPPOSE any man was to declare in the most solemn manner to an honest heathen what he pretended to believe, and withal communicate to him, the vices he indulged, which directly thwarted and opposed it: what would be the sentiments he would entertain of his sincerity?—The answer is but too notorious, wherever the propagation of christianity has been attempted: a repugnancy to their professions in the lives of its professors, has been a stumbling block which many could never get over; and is allowed to be one grand cause, why its progress and success have been no greater.

AND I wish we had no reason amongst ourselves, to ascribe the contempt and decay of religion, to an *impropriety* in the behaviour of the ministers of it.

BUT if any of our b—ps (for, I fear, in this evil they will not *all* be found to be guiltless) instead of discharging with the utmost attention and fidelity the offices of his

high station — instead of giving attendance, as God Almighty by his apostle has enjoined, *to reading — to exhortation — and to doctrine*; (a) shall be observed to fly from the scene of his pastoral care—to visit the houses of the great, and the palace of his prince: — shall be seen more frequently at *court* than at *church*:—shall make a greater proficiency in *politicks*, than in *piety*; being more active and zealous in *parliamenting*, than in *preaching*—and shall seem to seek the favour of an *earthly sovereign*, with much more ardour and solicitude than that of *the King of the universe*.

WHEN instead of being *a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, not given to filthy lucre*; but endeavouring in the whole of his conduct to be blameless (b)—that those who are of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of him: (c) he shall make additional wealth and power the grand object of his aim and ambition; and pay less regard to the behaviour and morals of his clergy, than to the greatness of their riches, or of their benefice.—No wonder, if good men, in that

(a) i. Tim. iv. 13.

(b) Tit. i. 7. 8.

(c) — ii. 8.

sphere

sphere of life in which he moves, and that is the sphere in which the most caution and circumspection are necessary,* should be of-

* YE are the salt of the earth : but if the salt has lost its flavour, wherewith shall it be salted ? *It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and troden under foot of men.* Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Mat. v. 13, 14.

IN maxuma fortuna, minima est licentia.

SAL.

THIS observation of Sallust reminds me of a very extraordinary reproof I once subjected myself to, from the RECTOR of a VERY GREAT LIVING ; for taking the liberty of applying it upon some occasion in conversation, which I apprehended might justify the use of it. At the time I quoted it, being in other company, he seemed to *mutter* assent, and to take no farther notice ; so that I had not the *unhappiness* to know, that I had incurred his displeasure. But *some years after*, which I could not but think more a proof of the *retentiveness* of his memory, than of the *placability* of his temper ; in private conference, he gave me to understand, *with a very haughty and disdainful air*, as impossible to be forgot, as it is to be described ; that it was very impertinent in me to cite Latin phrases to him ; whose knowledge in that language must be supposed as much superior to mine, *as his income was* : and besides, that he had seen that expression in *Terence*, and was very well acquainted with it, without my information. I was extremely surpris'd at the *purport* and *manner* of this reprehension ; and had scarcely resolution, or presence of mind, I know not which, to rectify his mis-conjecture concerning the author : however, I ventured at it, and took my leave, — *with all that deference and respect that are due to the merits of so great a man* : — entirely of his opinion, that, I had been guilty of great impertinence — and for the same reason, that I should have been deemed so — for talking in an *unintelligible tongue* to a company of *old women*.

fended at him—if bad men, should be confirmed in their prejudices both against him and his religion—and if all, who look not into their bibles, for their obligations to their duty, shall think themselves as much at liberty as his l——p, to pursue their respective inclinations.

AND so likewise if we descend to the parochial beneficed clergy; what effects, but those we too commonly see produced, can be expected to flow from a behaviour in many of them much to be lamented? when instead of transcribing the pattern of their blessed master, in *lowliness* and *meekness*—*going about doing good*—in alleviating, as far as their abilities will permit, the miseries and misfortunes of their fellow-creatures—and in finishing the most momentous *work of him that sent them*, by labouring in every part of their vocation *to break the dominion of sin, and to establish the kingdom of Christ, and his righteousness*:—they are in their carriage haughty and over-bearing—in their temper worldly and penurious—have little compassion for the indigent, and yet *less* for the ignorant—are very seldom in the church, but much seldom-

seldomer in the pulpit—preach what they chuse not to practise, and practise what they would be ashamed to preach—and have indeed very little to distinguish them as the ministers of the gospel, besides their venerable title, and the gravity of their dress :—what occasion will hence be taken to treat religion with indifferency and disrespect! and what encouragement, for the gratification of every man's favourite, or constitutional propensity.

For if they, who, besides the duty incumbent upon them in common with other christians, have an additional one arising from the *nature* of their calling, to be in a most especial manner conversant and exemplary in all holy offices; shall in their external and publick deportment, not pay a suitable regard even to the *form* of godliness, (*a*) but in their private conduct shall greatly deny the *power* thereof: others will not only think themselves less obliged to the observance of religious institutions; but will feel the restraints from vice much more feeble than a contrary demeanour in their teachers might probably have made them: their faith in the

(*a*) ii. Tim. iii. 5.

christian verities will be weakened, and the corruption of their nature strengthened by such examples; and that disinclination to *good* and towardness to *ill*, which is strong enough in most men, will *bererein* find a plea or an excuse for its respective indulgence.

BUT to what I have remarked upon this head, I shall add the observation of a right reverend author;* to whose piety and judgment, great deference, I think is due:—speaking of men's disbelief of sacred matters, and a profane contempt of them, he proceeds in the following words; — “ Now this I am forced to declare, that having had much free conversation with many that have been fatally corrupted that way, they have very often owned to me, that nothing promoted this so much in them, *as the very bad opinion they took up of all clergymen* : they did not see in them *that strictness* of life,—that *contempt* of the world — that *zeal* — that *meekness*, *humility*, and *charity* ; — that *diligence* and *earnestness* with relation to the great truths of the christian religion, which they reckoned, they would most certainly have, if they them-

* Bp. Burnet's Preface to his Pastoral Care.

selves firmly believed it; therefore they concluded, that those, whose business it was more strictly to enquire into the *truth* of their religion, knew that it was not so *certain*, as they themselves for *other ends* endeavoured to make the world believe it was: and that, though for carrying on their own authority or fortunes, which in one word, they call their **TRADE**, they seemed to be very positive in affirming the truth of their doctrines; yet they in their *own hearts* did not believe it, since they lived so little suitable to it, and were so much set on *raising* themselves by it, and so little on advancing the honour of their profession by an exemplary life and a shining conversation. This is a thing (as the bishop goes on) not to be answered by being angry at them for saying it, or by reproaching such as repeat it, as if they were *enemies to the church*: these words of heat and faction signify nothing to work upon, or convince any. For how little strength soever there may be in it, as it is made an argument; it is certainly so strong a prejudice, that nothing but a confutation of it, by the eminent virtues and **LABOURS** of many of the clergy, will ever conquer it."

AND

AND to bring about these virtues, nothing in all probability will more effectually conduce, than the obliging them to *personal residence* and to *personal labour*. For if being exercised in religious matters, has an allowed tendency to beget, and to promote internal piety and purity in other men, it surely would not totally fail in producing these effects in them. At least an exterior regard to the duties of their vocation, would have a better appearance, and give much less offence, than that palpable indifferency and unconcern, with which they are *too often* treated by them.

THE disposition of the mind, human law-makers are not able to penetrate, nor perhaps oftentimes to reform: but if the legislature have it not in their power to make the clergy *really* good, and to reduce their practice to an honest conformity to their profession;—they can withdraw from them some part of their present income; *the greatness of which is probably an encouragement to continue them bad*:—and bestow it upon others more worthy of it.

I AM very far from a *levelling* principle in respect

respect to the church, as well as the state; and heartily wish, and should sincerely rejoice, to see them both flourish in the greatest prosperity. For as there will always be different degrees of merit, so should there be differences, in the degree of the emolument, sufficient to distinguish it according to its deserts—and this, not as a *reward* merely, but as an *incitement* likewise.

BUT then as no man, who has an ability to labour himself, has a right to be supported by the labour of another; so every man, who has an inclination to labour, ought to be recompensed in such a manner, as his labour in equity seems to deserve. To different labourers, a different return may be made—as generosity is a virtue which may display itself as amply as it pleases upon its favourite objects; but justice is sacred, and ought not to be violated: and therefore, though generosity may give *more*,—justice should never give *less*, than is really deserved. And the eye of no considering man would be evil, because others were ever so *good*, was himself but equitably and fairly dealt by.—Let bishopricks, rectories, &c. have revenues

nues annexed to them, as large as the government shall think proper—the curates, I dare say, will never grudge nor repine, if a decent livelihood is reserved for them: and a decent livelihood, they certainly ought to have, both as useful members of the society, and ministers in the church of Christ.

AND was such a provision once legally established, especially with some other regulations that have often been wished for, (but hitherto alas! have been wished for in vain) with relation to PLURALITIES AND NON-RESIDENCES; religion, I doubt not, would in a few years recover the ground it has lost; and put on a more awful appearance than at present it wears: nay, the very attention of the government to it, would be of service to regain its credit; and would dispose people to conceive more highly of its utility and importance; when they observed the wisdom and solicitude of the nation, *seriously* engaged in retrieving and supporting its sinking influence and honor.—There would not then be that difficulty in procuring *regularly educated* curates, as every man, who has wanted one, knows there is *now*:—nor would the

there be any more such a disagreeable necessity, to have recourse to country-schools to fill our pulpits.

AND if there are so many concurrent reasons to render such a measure necessary, why should it not *immediately* be taken into consideration, and as soon as possible effected?

SOME perhaps might judge such an establishment, a kind of invasion of property — a wresting away what belongs to, and is the right of one man, to put it into the hands of another.

BUT to argue in this sort, is to confound the ideas and distinctions of things; which, if properly attended to, must certainly correct all such misconceptions. For whatever right or property a man may have in the church, he can have nothing hereditarily in it: and as that right is founded in, and was constituted by, the will of the government; both its security and continuance depend upon that will, and can no longer subsist, than they are supported by it. That authority which ordained such an income the right of one clergyman, in consideration of such

such duties to be performed; when these duties are either *not at all*, or *partially* fulfilled; may, with equal justice, either *wholly*, or *in part*, confer it upon another, who shall, and does discharge the obligation better.

FOR whether we consider tithes as of human or of divine appointment; the division of the kingdom into diocesses and parishes, and the appropriation of the tithes of parishes to rectors and vicars, are *merely human* and *arbitrary* institutions: — not made immutable, and of equal duration with the constitution itself; but alterable *at pleasure*; whenever that power which appointed them shall see sufficient cause to justify any such alteration. For the laws of England, are not like those of the Medes and Persians* — that no decree, nor statute which is once established, may be changed; — nor indeed is it fit they should be: since to make laws

* WHAT made these laws unalterable, it is not easy to determine, unless that when they were passed, the king confirmed them by an oath, and then they became immutable: or that they were signed not only by the king, but by all the princes then in council, as from Daniel, vi. 8. and Esther, i. — we would be inclined to suppose.

Lowth's and Patrick's comment.

perpetu

perpetual obligation, seems to be a prerogative peculiar to an all-perfect Being; which knows, not only what is past, but what is to come; and can foresee every contingency that can possibly happen in the course of his Providence — or through the operations of agents, whether free or physical: and who therefore can wisely adapt his commands to all seasons, occasions, and vicissitudes, which the rotation of time, in the most distant period, is able to produce.

BUT the reasoning of man is often fallacious, and his penetration into futurity, not at all to be depended upon. He can only consider with tolerable certainty the present posture of affairs; and in viewing *that*, may overlook many material circumstances, unto which he ought to have adverted, to render his judgment complete: so that his best digested schemes may prove defective; — and insufficient, whether to remedy the evil, or to bring about the good, which is the object of his intention.

OR if for the present his determinations should answer according to his wish; yet, whatever he can frame with the most provident

vident care, may, after the revolution of a few years, be attended with many inconveniences; of which, as his wisdom and circumspection, were not aware, so have they not against them made any provision. The only method therefore left, is by a second act to rectify the errors of the first; and to accommodate it, to the different circumstances of times and things, which made its ordination necessary, and rendered the first *useless* at least, if not a *burthen* and *grievance* to the people.

If then the appropriation of tithes, as the laws relating to them, stand at present, does not answer the end which was originally intended by it—but religion, which it was designed to foster and encourage, becomes neglected, and suffers greatly in the esteem of mankind: where is the impropriety pray! (for injustice is altogether out of the question) of fixing it upon *such persons* and upon *such conditions*, as may most effectually promote the *primary* design of its being fixed at all? — If rectors, &c. decline that parochial duty which, it was presumed they would perform; and for the performance of which,

which, the tithe was allowed by the government as a recompense; has not the government a *right*—nay! is it not *obliged* for the same reasons which determined it in its *first* appointment, to settle the revenues of the church upon *such persons* and in *such proportions*, as upon a fair and equitable consideration shall be found most meet?—The curate might then be entitled to a fourth—to a third—or to a moiety of the income of the living: which would *then* be as much his property, as it is the property of the rector *now*. The law has heretofore constituted the one, and it has a power and a *right* to constitute the other when ever it pleases. And so long as the tithe is devoted to the ministers of the church, the putting it into such hands as shall be judged most deserving of it; is not only acting conformably to the important trust, which, we may presume, is deposited in the government by the providence of God; but is indisputably most agreeable to his will and command, as communicated to us in his own revelation.

AND against such a disposition of the ecclesiastical emoluments, what can even the

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incumbents themselves *reasonably* alledge?
 —If they do not approve it, no curate is hereby intended to be obtruded upon them; but they have a liberty to take care of their respective parishes themselves; (and it is much to be wished, that they would make a conscience of doing so) and no man then, who has the least veneration for his religion, would surely grudge them the enjoyment of the income however great.

BUT if necessity shall constrain; or *avaritiusness*, or *indolence* prevail upon them to call in an assistant; 'tis very fit, that a disinterested authority should determine betwixt the parties; and that one should not have the power to divide both the *duty* and the *profits*, just as the partiality of his own mind may dictate.

As to those rectors, &c. whose money has made them such—who have either themselves or by the instrumentality of their friends purchased their preferments — it possibly may appear hard to them; that they should be deprived of any part of that income, for which they have paid a valuable consideration.

But

BUT then — to say nothing at present of the illegality of such practice * — it should be recollected — that whatever of that kind is bought, must be taken with all the contingencies to which it is liable. No patron can insure a purchaser, that no such thing will at any time take place ; nor would chuse to

* THIS may best appear by laying before the reader the words of the act : — “ And whereas some of the clergy have procured preferments for themselves, by buying ecclesiastical livings ; and others have been thereby discouraged ; be it therefore enacted by the authority aforesaid, that if any person from and after the 29th day of September 1714 shall, or do, for any sum of money, reward, gift, profit or advantage, directly or indirectly, or for or by reason of any promise, agreement, grant, bond, covenant, or other assurance, of or for any sum of money, reward, gift, profit, or benefit whatsoever, directly or indirectly, in his own name, or in the name of any person or persons, take, procure, or accept the next avoidance, or presentation to any benefice with cure of souls, dignity, prebend, or living ecclesiastical, and shall be presented, or collated thereupon ; that then every such presentation or collation, and every admission, institution, investiture and induction upon the same, shall be utterly void and frustrate, and of no effect in law, and such agreement shall be deemed and taken to be a simoniacal contract ; and that it shall and may be lawful to and for the Queen's majesty, her heirs and successors, to present or collate unto, or give or bestow every such benefice, &c. for that one time or term only : and the person so corruptly taking, procuring, or accepting any such benefice, &c. shall thereupon and from thenceforth be adjudged a disabled person

to make himself responsible for it, if it should.
 —If any thing unforeseen shall happen to the advantage of the purchaser; *this* makes no alteration in the conditions of the sale, nor entitles the vender to any after-acknowledgment: so likewise, if any partition, or alienation of any share of the profits of a living, shall be ordained by the government for the use of a curate, in consideration of his performing either the whole, or part of the duty thereof; the incumbent should consider that this is no more than what his living was always subject to; and however *unexpectedly* or *unwelcomely* it may have come; there is no unconstitutional stretch of power, nor any thing at all unequitable in it.

For it is not in matters of this kind, as in a man's acquired or hereditary property, since this is absolutely his own, and at his

person in law to have and enjoy the same benefice, &c. and shall also be subject to any punishment, pain, or penalty limited, prescribed or inflicted by the laws ecclesiastical, in like manner as if such corrupt agreement had been made after such benefice, &c. had become vacant: any law or statute to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding."

Vid. Statutes at large. Anno regni duodecimo Annæ reginæ.
 Cap. 12. S. 2.

own disposal ; and cannot be taken from him contrary to his consent ; without an infringement of the laws of natural justice, as well as of those of his country : and to whomsoever this property is conveyed—whether by donation, or purchase, in *him* may all the right and tithe be invested, which secured it to its original owner.

BUT church revenues are *arbitrary* appointments, established by the government, and bestowed upon particular men for particular services. These men have an undoubted right in them, whilst that law remains in force from which they derive it : but as that law is *alterable*, so is their right : and what is theirs now, may by the same authority for *just reasons* be awarded to another ; and become then as much *his* right, as it was *theirs* before. And there can be no more cause to complain of such alteration, than there is at present,—*that one man's tithe or parish, is greater than that of another.*

BUT perhaps a gentleman who has an inclination to sell, as well as he who has bought a living, may think himself agrieved

by such a law as I am pleading for:—since the *higher* the stipend of the curate is settled, the *lower* must the income of the parson be sunk;—and consequently the less money will the sale of the advowson 'or presentation bring to the patron.

BUT admitting this to be so—and that any man could be of so *mean* and *contracted* a temper, as to suffer the apprehension of such an event to disquiet him: it is not fit that a national evil shall remain unremedied, upon account of a few personal and trifling inconveniences that possibly might attend it: but perhaps it might rather be wished, that every impediment might be thrown in the way to prevent such a kind of traffick—*so manifestly repugnant to the end and design of patronages* and often the occasion of pitiful *subterfuges* and *evasions*, and, I fear too, of downright *perjury* amongst the clergy, *

But

* THAT mankind may judge what opinion the church certains of this practise, and of the care she has taken to prevent it, I shall present to the readers view her 40th canon which contains the oath against simony at institution into benefices—"to avoid the *detestable* sin of simony, because buy-

BUT if such a privilege is to be tenderly regarded, suppose—the nomination to the curacy, as well as the presentation to the living was vested in the patron! and then if the stipend allowed by act of parliament was a

and selling of spiritual and ecclesiastical functions, offices, promotions, dignities and livings, is execrable before God: therefore the archbishop, and all and every bishop or bishops, or any other person or persons having authority to admit, institute, collate, install, or to confirm the election of any archbishop, bishop, or other person or persons, to any spiritual or ecclesiastical function, dignity, promotion, title, office, jurisdiction, place, or benefice, with cure, or without cure, or to any ecclesiastical living whatsoever shall, before every such admission, institution, collation, installation, or confirmation of election, respectively minister, to every person hereafter to be admitted, instituted, collated, installed, or confirmed in or to any archbishoprick, bishoprick, or other spiritual, or ecclesiastical function, dignity, promotion, title, office, jurisdiction, place, or benefice, with cure, or without cure, or in or to any ecclesiastical living whatever, this Oath, in manner and form following, the same to be taken by every one whom it concerneth in his own person, and not by a proctor: *I, N. N. do swear, that I have made no simoniacal payment, contract, or promise directly or indirectly, by myself or by any other, to my knowledge, or with my consent, to any person or persons whatsoever, for or concerning the procuring and obtaining of this ecclesiastical dignity, place, preferment, office or living (respectively and particularly naming the same whereunto he is to be admitted, instituted, collated, installed, or confirmed) nor will at any time hereafter perform or satisfy any such kind of payment, contract, or promise made by any other without my knowledge or consent: so help me God, through Jesus Christ."*

considerable one (for if otherwise, it would not in any respect merit attention) a merchandising disposition would know how to make an advantage of *this*, as well as of the other.

AND indeed setting aside the consideration of advantage; I do not see, why the nomination of the curate may not be in the patron, with as much propriety, as the presentation to the benefice. For if he is allowed to be a competent judge of the qualifications of one to fill the living, he certainly must be so, in the choice of an assistant; and by this means not only his influence would be strengthened, and become more extensive; but in many places where the patron does not reside; such a substitute might be deputed, as would supply his place in the most agreeable manner, and make his absence less regretted. And of this I am very certain—that in a general way, the substitute would find more generosity, and less expectation of submission and homage, in a lay-nominator, than in an ecclesiastical one.

It is very far from being any pleasure to me, to say any thing which may seem to reflect

reflect upon that body of men, which however unworthy *themselves* may be, their *order* is very respectable: but the treatment I have met with myself from some of the beneficed clergy—particularly where I had manifold reasons to expect a contrary demeanour; and with a sympathetick sensation, have seen shewn to others in the like situation; is sufficient to convince me, that there is an haughtiness in many of them, exceeding *that* which we find in any other set of men: in-somuch that it is a common observation amongst the laity—THAT NO PEOPLE CARRY IT SO HIGH, NOR SO ILL TO EACH OTHER AS THE CLERGY. Shameful observation indeed!—Whether it is that they look upon their preferment as the reward of their merit—and upon those, who have not been fortunate enough to obtain any, as destitute of every qualification that can deserve it;—I pretend not to determine: but they demean themselves too often towards them, as if this was *really* the case.

How such an arrogant disposition is to be reconciled with the spirit of christianity, is
their

their business to find out : for this, I know, enjoins all its professors, in *lowliness of mind to esteem others better than themselves,*(a) both, according to Dr. Hammond's paraphrase, in wisdom and piety : *and not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly.*(b) And truly generous and noble souls, could not, was such an opinion ever so well grounded, be raised upon it into any undue elation : nor would the kind gifts of nature or providence liberally imparted to them, dispose them to look with contempt upon those who were not so happily distinguished ; and who upon account of their inferiority, have rather a claim to such tender and compassionate usage, as may diminish the sense of the disadvantages they labour under, and make them less painfully felt.

I KNOW very well, that in imputations of this nature, it is frequently retorted ; that the persons who alledge them are generally most culpable, as having that vice in a greater degree, than those, against whom their accusations are brought.

(a) Phil. ii. 3.

(b) Rom. xii. 3.

AND this observation, I can readily believe, is not seldom founded upon truth :—for if a man, upon any imaginary notions of excellency, shall expect from others more deference and submission than are really his due, or they can perceive any just cause to pay him; he will be apt to ascribe *that* to *their* pride, which is imputable only to *his own*; and may be ready enough to place their withholding those testimonies of respect, he judges his right, to their malevolence—or want of discernment : which, was he not wanting in the grace of humility, and *in a proper knowledge of himself*, would never have been judged worthy the least notice — and much less, any degree of resentment.

BUT a curate must be very ignorant indeed, and must have made very superficial observations amongst mankind, who can expect from his rector either deference or submission : who, however deficient he may be in other respects, is supposed to possess a larger share of wealth ; and *this* it is, which as the world goes, gives a man a preference, and entitles him to the *external* marks of esteem — being
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the grand object of the pursuit of mankind, and unto which they pay their constant court and adoration.

BUT every man surely may expect civility and politeness; and ought to be treated with them, even by people of the highest rank: and from such he will never fail to receive them; if good-nature and good-manners, have any share in the composition of the gentleman.

BUT when a curate is upon all occasions used with palpable slight — *studiously* kept at an awful distance, and not permitted any freedoms of an *bumble* companion: when he is designedly excluded every society, where the rector has an influence—or if admitted, where he has none, is deemed impertinent for attempting a modest share in conversation—is eyed with a malicious scorn; and seldom or never judged worthy of an answer: there must be little perception or sensibility in such a man's mind not to distinguish *this*; or to pass it over without some disagreeable emotions.

EVERY ingenuous man must know, that an *open affront*, is more tolerable, and sooner forgot,

forgot, than any *contemptuous usage*. The one may occasion a present perturbation and hurry of passion; but when that subsides, as probably in most tempers, it shortly will; the mind recovers its wonted calm, and all is well again: but the other injects a most poignant sting, which creates, and leaves a lasting anguish—which yields an uneasiness, not for a single day only, but for many; and most commonly is with more difficulty healed, than any which is effected by every other species of offence. And probably the forest aggravation of the miseries of the indigent, especially of those, who, from a creditable condition in life are become such, arises from that almost universal neglect and derision, which they are sure to experience from an ill-natured world: * *The scornful reproof of the wealthy, and the despitefulness of the proud,* add greatly to their other evils; and render a life in itself deplorable enough, much more so, by such unkind and unnatural treatment.

It was therefore matter of astonishment

* Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,

Quam quod ridiculos homines facit: —

Juv.

and

and concern to myself, as well as to many others, to hear at an episcopal visitation a publick invitation given, to all the RECTORS AND VICARS TO DINE with his lordship. And *this* in the presence of the *Curates*, who constituted the most numerous part of his *clerical* attendants; and were forced to undergo the *undeserved mortification*, to be ear-witnesses of this *exclusive* proclamation. Confusion seemed to seize them; and the *honest and indignant* blood suffused their downcast faces — but not through a consciousness of either guilt or blame: and, *like sheep without a shepherd*, in disorder and dejection were they obliged to retire from that sacred place wherein they had been convened, to seek for corporeal refreshment where they could find it.

Some natural warmth they shew'd, but check'd it soon:
The town was all before them, where to chuse
Their place of rest, and providence their guide.

They
In different streets with wand'ring steps and flow,
Thro' M——d took their solitary way.

MILTON.

Now what could induce his lordship, at
such a time and place, before such a nume-

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rous body of spectators too ; to stigmatize this part of his clergy with such an open manifestation of his disregard ? — If the principal cause and use of visitations, are, as our 137th canon declares, that the bishop may get some good knowledge of the state, sufficiency, and ability of the clergy, and other persons whom he is to visit : what reason can be assigned why the CURATES should be shut out from his lordship's presence and enquiries ? Are they not capable of giving rational and pertinent answers to any question, concerning the exercise of their function, and the morals of their people ? — If they are not, they stand the more in need of his lordship's instruction and advice. Or, shall we affirm, that they want not, *so much* as their beneficed brethren, those spiritual directions and assistances, which, we are to suppose, are *his lordship's business and care in conversation to impart* ? — This I dare not say : — why then, if they want them more, should they be denied the opportunity and privilege of receiving them ? Or if his lordship's countenance and notice are at all necessary to encourage his clergy, and

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to render them the more respectable among the people: surely then they ought the *most* to be shewn to those, who by their station in life are the lowest in their estimation. Or shall we say — that the salary of curates best enables them to defray their personal expence, without any participation of his l——p's generosity?—This, I must believe, needs no answer. Why then, when there are so many concurring reasons to the contrary, should his l——p reverse the scripture rule and command, *by calling together not his poor, but his rich neighbours, and filling them with good things, whilst he sends the hungry empty away?*

As it is not in my power to find an answer to this question, agreeable to the sentiments I would willingly entertain of the successor of an apostle; I shall leave it for the disquisition of a more inventive genius and shall close these remarks, with another observation to my present purpose, transcribed out of my favourite book. “There remains” says the right reverend author, “only somewhat to be added concerning the behaviour of the clergy towards one another. Those of a higher form in learning, dignity

and wealth, ought not to despise poor vicars and curates; but on the contrary, the poorer they are, they ought to pity and encourage them the more, since they are all of *the same order*, only the one are the more happily placed than the others: they ought therefore to cherish those that are in worse circumstances, and encourage them to come often to them; they ought to lend them books, and to give them other assistances in order to their progress in learning. It is a bad thing to see a *bishop* behave himself *superciliously* towards *any* of his clergy, but IT IS INTOLERABLE IN THOSE OF THE SAME DEGREE. More to this purpose may be found by those who have the good sense to approve it, in Bp. Burnet's Pastoral Care. 185.

WHAT I have hitherto said, may be thought principally with an eye to stipendiary curates: but though great sufferers in point of income, they are far from being the only sufferers: since curates of parochial chapels, and chapels of ease are oftentimes no better provided for, than they are. The bounty of the late Queen

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Ann,

Ann,* which was a most royal and noble charity, was indeed intended to remedy this grievance, by augmenting the incomes of those chapels, so as to make them a comfortable maintenance for their respective ministers. But the benefits arising from this bounty, accrue but slowly — are commonly with great difficulty — and unless by lot, which rarely happens, sometimes impossible to be, obtained: insomuch, that there are many chapels, I believe, which have never received them at all, as well as a considerable number that have partook of them; but none, as far as I know or have heard, in

* THIS is the first fruits and tenths of every spiritual dignity, benefice, or promotion; which before the 26th of Henry the VIII. were paid to the Pope; but by a statute in that year, the king: the repeal of this statute by Queen Mary, was repealed by the 1. Eliz. C. 4. whereby the first fruits, &c. were restored to the crown: and so continued till by 2, 3, Ann, C. 1. it was enacted, that the Queen might by letters patent, incorporate such persons as she should appoint, to have a common seal, and perpetual succession; and settle upon the said corporation the first fruits and tenths of all benefices spiritual, for the augmentation of the maintenance of the ministers of the church of England, officiating in any church or chapel of England, Wales, or Berwick upon Tweed, not sufficiently provided for

Dr. Grey's Abridg. of Dr. Gibson's Cod. &c.

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manner equal to what is expected from such an ample donation.

THE fund constituted by this bounty, was, as I have been credibly informed, several years ago increased to near two hundred thousand pounds; and we may suppose from its usual supply, is still receiving accessions yearly: but what mighty occasion there is for its farther increase—or indeed for its being increased to the *size* it is — my sagacity, I confess, is unable to explore. For the more *this* has accumulated, the less hitherto must it have answered the purpose for which it was designed;—the augmentation of poor livings being fewer, in proportion to the money that was reserved to augment this fund: so that whilst the fund was growing rich, the church continued poor; and could not, however so fast as it otherwise might, emerge out of its low estate.

It appears therefore not a little to be lamented, that the augmentations should not be, not only more large in themselves, but more *easily* and *expeditiously* affected than at present they are. The party who is desirous, to see an object of the charity, his being oblig-

ed to raise two hundred pounds in order to entitle him thence to two hundred pounds more, is a condition in many places absolutely impossible to be fulfilled:—all the friends and interest a man has, being unwilling or insufficient to furnish any such sum: so that unless fortune — or whatever else you will *better* call it, may favour him with a lot, which it is great odds does not prove the case; — the poverty of his situation, which should strongly recommend him to the charity, is the only circumstance that excludes him from it.

WHATEVER necessity therefore, there might be in the infancy of the charity, to impose upon the parties any such obligation in its mature state, it seems unnecessary — and an hardship:—something apparently rather calculated, or *continued*, to retard the progress of that good work, the benevolent founder had in view, than to promote, and bring it sooner to its wished for consummation.

AND after all—the apprehension of a danger such a fund may stand exposed to, may not perhaps be altogether groundless.

THE same power, which gave it, may, whenever it pleases, resume the gift: and what is now the property of the church, may, by the determination of that power, become the property of the state. And if in any future exigency (as who can tell how *soon*, or how *pressing* it may be) it should appear to the wisdom of the government requisite to re-appropriate it to the crown, or to its own use; many hard censures will fall upon those, to whom the management of it has been entrusted, for not more vigorously applying it, whilst it was at their disposal.

BUT whatever from this *source* may be derived to these chapels; a decent supply might by parliament be provided for them, by giving them a power over *that*, unto which they seem already to have an equitable claim.

FOR at what period soever these chapels were erected, it was necessity, we may suppose, unto which they owe their existence. The parishoners, at the parochial division of diocesses, were comparatively very few; and probably placed themselves, as near to the

parish church as conveniently they could, that they might with the more ease and frequency, repair to it for the purposes of devotion. But as they increased in number, they were obliged to spread themselves to a farther extent: so that in process of time, many large parishes might become occupied, a great part of which lay before, in an uninhabited, and uncultivated condition. And as many of the parishes were very extensive; many of the parishioners must of consequence be thrown at a great distance from their parish church: so that their resorting thither must be attended with great labour and fatigue; and in some places, at certain seasons of the year, be altogether out of their power. The spiritual intercourse therefore betwixt them and their minister, must be greatly interrupted, if not totally cut off: he being no more able to wait upon them, than they were, to wait upon him:—the distance rendering it alike impracticable to both. Their sick must therefore die unvisited—their dead be carried with much labour and expence a long way for interment—their ignorant remain uninstructed—and their well-disposed, deprived

of the use of those religious ordinances, which were instituted by their gracious author for our consolation, and improvement in holiness, here, and to prepare us for the fruition of blessedness hereafter.

Now to remedy these inconveniences, which must be allowed to be very sore and burthensome; parochial chapels were permitted and undertaken to be edified. But as, whilst the present laws relating to ecclesiastical revenues subsist, there could be no alienation of any of the rights from the parish church; the ministers of them were obliged to be contented with what endowments they could procure — together with some trifling contributions collected from the people, or with some small rents arising from the seats; and which, though inconsiderable in themselves in general, and making in the whole but a scanty income for the maintenance of a family, were commonly paid with reluctance and complaints: the people not being able to reconcile it to their notions of common equity—that a clergyman with whom they have no spiritual connexion,—who never comes amongst, nor expresses any regard for,

them; should be entitled to, and carry off, that tithe, which should be the support of the pastor, to whose immediate care they are committed; and who, by the highest authority in the church, is appointed to minister to them in holy things.

THESE sentiments, however ill they may accord with the present laws, appear to have nothing in them dissonant to reason: so far from it, that where a minister's province terminates, there, according to the decisions of equity, should his profits too; and the limits which bound his cure, should set bounds to his gain also: otherwise in a literal sense, *he reaps that whereon he bestows no labour; other men labour, and he enters into their labours.*

SHOULD one tradesman draw upon another, *either for goods delivered, or work done* by a third person; he would be deemed an iniquitous invader of his neighbour's property, and would be prosecuted and punished accordingly.

THIS, I am very sensible, is an illegal act—contrary to the laws both of reason and our country: and pity it is, the other is not so too.

100. Which however it may at present have the laws of our country to support it, can, under the different circumstances which time has produced since these laws were originally enacted, expect little to be advanced by the laws of reason in its support.

DOES it not appear more consonant to the unprejudiced notions of every man's mind, that these large parishes should be again divided? Or, at least, that the tithes of those particular townships, for whose use the chapels were erected, should be appropriated to the ministers of them? That every chapel hereafter to be erected shall enjoy the same privileges — and that as none shall be built save in cases of necessity — so that necessity shall be judged of, upon a fair representation, by those who shall be thought most competent and unbiassed in the affair, and who shall be appointed to give a final determination. *

* THE incumbent should always be excluded this number, I fancy, every man will assent to Cæsar's opinion in Sallust — *Haud facile animus verum providet, ubi illa (nempe affectus et passiones) officiant; neque quisquam omnium lubidini simul usus paruit. Ubi intenderis ingenium, valet, si lubido effudet, ea dominatur; animus nihil valet.*

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As to churches which are built for the conveniency of inhabitants in populous towns; their ministers are generally well provided for, by a rent-charge fixed upon the seats: so that they stand not in need of such help from a portion of the tithes, as the curates of chapels in the country manifestly do. For their incomes are mostly very small—often-times disagreeably conditioned—and perhaps, not always, but with much difficulty, and some inconsistency of character, to be preserved and obtained.

AND why would there be any more impropriety in dividing large parishes now, than there was in dividing parishes at first, when the whole diocese was one parish, and the cathedral the only church in it?—If this question does not please some: pray! let them assign a reason why dioceses were divided at all! Why might they not have continued distinct parishes, and the bishops have been constituted universal rectors of them? Who might have stationed their curates in all parts as had been judged necessary; and have allowed them such salaries as the curates have all along received:—and that reason they shall think sufficient to demand and justify the alteration.

ration as it is at present ; I dare venture to affirm, will be found sufficient to justify any future alteration of the like nature. For as the people increased and spread themselves over the kingdom ; it was judged fit, that other churches, besides the cathedral, should be erected :* and in time the division of parishes was thought of ; that every minister might have his own *proper district* appointed him, in which he was to discharge the offices of his function, and from which he was to receive his maintenance. But the division, it is supposed, was not begun and ended at once ; but had its commencement at one time, and at some subsequent periods received its establishment :—was altered probably at different seasons, as the different circumstances of things might require ; before it was fixed in the manner it has for many years been,

* At first there was only one church in each diocese, viz. at the place where the bishop with his clergy resided and performed all divine offices, as at London, Canterbury, &c. from whence, as necessity required, priests were sent out to preach and baptize in the remoter parts of the diocese ; but the Saxon *thanes* or noblemen did very early begin to erect lesser churches for their own convenience, which yet were not to be made use of, till consecrated by the bishop, and it was many ages before the parochial division of dioceses was affected. Dr. Grey's abridgment, &c.

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and as at present we find it. And if a similar necessity should call for another alteration, why should it not be made?—Because inconveniences have arisen, which in the primary constitution were not foreseen, must they therefore for ever subsist?—There is the same authority to apply a remedy now, that there was then; and why should not a remedy be then applied?

RELIGION, one would hope, is not less the care of this generation, than of those that are past: and the honour and service of God, and the credit and comfort of his ministers, will not be overlooked as things of no consequence in the present age, which in former ages have been judged deserving the utmost attention.

To the everlasting honour of two female reigns *especially* much has been done for both:—and, I doubt not, as the throne is at this day filled with a sovereign, whose whole behaviour evidences his sense of, and regard for, religion; were things relating to the church and the ministers of it, fairly represented to his majesty, any scheme for their good, would not only meet with his gracious approbation, but be cordially favoured

voured with every assistance in the power of the crown to yield. The King would rejoice in so pious a work — *in promoting the spiritual welfare together with the temporal interests of his people.* And if to such a cause so mighty an advocate could once be gained, who might reasonably expect in it, *the wisdom of the Almighty to be his guide, and his arm to strengthen him*; our eyes, I fear not, would soon behold the success of his designs for the service of God's true religion established amongst us: hypocrisy and profaness, superstition and idolatry would then be less able to stand before his face: heresies and false doctrines would not be so likely to disturb the peace of the church; nor schisms and causeless divisions to weaken it: but we should probably be more of one heart and of one mind, than in the present posture of ecclesiastical affairs 'tis likely we shall be. And no event would make him possess in a higher degree the hearts of his *already respectful* people; and transmit his name to posterity with juster encomiums, and more lasting honors.

AND pity it is, that from so well-disposed a prince,

prince, any intelligence should be withheld, that would affect his mind with tender impressions, and excite his zeal for the glory of his Maker! Since that church and its ministers, of which he is upon earth the supreme Governor, would probably find in him an affectionate patron and defender; and a solicitude and earnestness for the prosperity of them both; *and equal at least* to any that have been expressed by the most religious of his royal predecessors.

THE civil officers about his majesty, may possibly confine their attention to civil affairs; and may judge it a deviation from their proper sphere and department to intermeddle in those that are spiritual. But there are a powerful body of men, who can have no such pretence—who are the GUARDIANS AND CURATORS OF RELIGION; and whose immediate business it is to lay every grievance that may affect it, before the throne; and, in order to obtain its more speedy redress, to become humble and importunate suitors to his majesty for his aid and concurrence.

ECCLESIASTICAL matters must come with great propriety, and a very good grace from eccle-

ecclesiastics: and any proposal that has a tendency to subserve religion and the church, whatever may be the final issue of it, must redound to the honor of the proposer; and will enrol his name in the annals of Great Britain amongst the worthies of the English nation.

BUT there seems no doubt of success in an affair, which has so much reason and equity to plead in its behalf, was it but once heartily engaged in. There may be men indeed so attached to their private interest, that every scheme by which they apprehend it at all affected, they will blindly oppose; and no wonder, if, upon that account, they should find themselves inclined to oppose this: but such must soon see cause to be ashamed of their opposition; and a consciousness of the rectitude of a measure, which every honest mind must feel, would certainly silence them, if not bring them over to the side of truth and justice.

WOULD to God — our venerable prelates would sincerely make the experiment! How glorious would they appear in so pious a cause! — And what humanity and tenderness would

would such behaviour indicate towards their meaner and suffering brethren!

THE verity of the observations I have made, needs not any proof to them, as they have the best opportunities of being informed of it: they must be supposed to know the state of the church and of its ministers better than any other men; and cannot but be sensible of the languishing condition of the one, and of the distresses which are amongst the other. And greatly it is to be lamented; if any trifling and pecuniary considerations upon their own account, shall restrain the piety and benevolence of their minds, when a matter of such vast importance requires the utmost display and exertion of them.

BUT O! my poor heart! For I cannot suppress its fearful forebodings: in spite of my strongest inclination to think well—a sudden damp chills my hopes; and something within me, like a prophetick impulse, prefaces no relief from this quarter. — May it prove a false and delusive suggestion! — May the fathers of the church manifest themselves FATHERS INDEED! — studying sincerely their future glory and prosperity; — and in affection

tion and gratitude, do the best in their power for her, whose revenues have so liberally sustained them in affluence and splendor! Let all sordid and selfish views give place to those which tend to the publick good! Let not a mean and contracted spirit, over-rule and subdue a spirit for the common utility! And let no little and personal regards which would be unbecoming the *lowest* of mankind, intermix with, and debase so noble and unsullied a character, as a b—p should support!

BUT if my prayers are not heard, and my wishes are uttered in vain: give me leave, O you wise and worthy patriots! to implore your honest aid! Ye who have honourably distinguished yourselves in your country's cause — who seem to seek, and endeavour to maintain its dignity and welfare, consider the low estate of your established church, and cast a pitying eye upon the indigent ministers of it! Your cares for the good of the state are very laudable, and merit the best thanks of every member of it: and your cares for the good of the church will be at least equally so — will recommend you in an

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especial manner to the acceptance of God, and so entitle you to an heavenly, as well as to an earthly glory.

————— *O colendi*

Semper et culti, date quæ precamur.

Si quæret pater patriæ

Subscribi statuis—

Clarus post genitis—

LET him stand forth in a full assembly of our most august senators, a glorious champion in religion's cause !

IT is the cause of heaven ; and heaven, I trust, will prosper it. And let those blush who from their station in life, should have been leaders, and not led, into this business whose zeal should have animated and actuated others, and not have lain dormant, until roused and shamed by others into action. And let every man, from the king upon the throne to the lowest member of the community, contribute his endeavours to the successful issue of so important a work !

LET the interest of the mighty, and the tongue of the eloquent be employed in its favour

favour! And let those who have no other way of subserving it, pour out their earnest supplications to that Almighty Being, who has the disposal of all events, and can turn the hearts of men as *seemeth best to his godly wisdom*; that he would not in his anger remove *our candlestick* out of its place; but that it may by his grace and goodness, be fixed perpetually amongst us, and adorned with fresh lustre:—that the revenues of the church may decently support *all* the ministers of it, and the ministers of it, support the authority and influence of religion—that every man in his vocation and ministry may truly and godly serve him—and that our church by his blessing, may become the PRAISE AND GLORY OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

AND, to these things, I believe, I may presume to affirm, there are very few Englishmen, especially members of our communion, that will not cordially say—*Amen*.

THERE is another inconveniency which stipendiary curates are subject to, and which may appear a more disagreeable one, than any I have already mentioned: I should have taken notice of it something sooner, had I not judged it best to reserve it for a place here; the accident which discovered it to me requiring a full and circumstantial relation, both in justice to an injured character; and to undeceive some part of mankind, whose credulity may have been imposed upon, by the base falsties, and prevarications of a shameless relator.

It was always my opinion, (and as far as I can learn, the opinion of every body else) that as no curate had a right to officiate in any diocese, before he was licensed for that purpose by the bishop of it; so that license, when obtained, fixed him in the cure unto which he had been nominated, independently of the will of every one, but of the person who granted it. For him indeed there is in the body of the license,* a power to
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* THE license runs thus—S. by divine permission lord bishop of C. to our well-beloved in Christ A. B. greeting. We do by these presents give and grant unto you (*during our pleasure*) at the
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withdraw it, reserved : but this power, we may suppose, was not given to be used in an *arbitrary* and capricious manner, but for such weighty reasons, as would justify its revocation ; and were sufficient to occasion to the person licensed, a forfeiture of his right to be any longer continued such. For if when the license is recalled, a right to exercise the clerical functions determines ; a curate's employment must cease of course, and consequently his income. So that a power of this nature, we must imagine, should be very *cautiously* exerted ; — and not at all — but when a man proves himself no longer fit for the sacred offices : and either for gross negligence in the discharge of his vocation, or for scandalous immoralities in his behaviour, shall deserve so exemplary and opprobrious a punishment.

As the clergy are men of like passions with others, they may fall into vices of which others are guilty : and was there not power lodged in some hands to keep them

nomination of D. R. rector of the parish church of G. in the county and diocese of C. our license and faculty to perform the office of a curate in the parish church of G. aforesaid, &c.

in awe; the remonstrances of conscience and a sense of duty, might be too weak to stimulate them to a proper attention to their business; and to make them orderly and regular in their conversation and conduct. Very ill-constituted therefore our church must seem; and very liable religion and its ministers to suffer shame and reproach, if there was no authority to chastise those, who dare to offend against all order and decency; and to take from such as far as possible, all opportunity of being farther detrimental to religion, who seem to have lost all inclination to promote its service. But then, as this is a very severe punishment; it ought not to be inflicted but upon extraordinary occasions, and every other method should be first attempted to reclaim a delinquent, before a step is taken that may prove his ruin. Admonitions and menaces may sometimes effect a cure, and render every severer means unnecessary: and where reformation, and not destruction, is wished for, humanity will dictate the use of every tender and gentle means, previous to those, that must be attended with great pain and disgrace.

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THUS for many years, I imagined, that the license was the curate's security; and that though his salary was small, he had the satisfaction to look upon it as a certainty;—and that nothing could deprive him of it, but such irregularities as rendered him obnoxious to ecclesiastical censures.

BUT an affair which has lately happened betwixt a rector and his curate, has sufficiently rectified my mistake; and convinced me that it is as useless a piece of paper as any other in his study, answering no other end, but to buoy up the person who relies upon it, with a false confidence, and to bring a handsome fee into the pocket of the bishop's secretary.

FOR though it might be remarked, that it deprives the incumbent of the power to discharge his curate *ad libitum*, and so far may settle him in a state of independency; yet this is saying little to the purpose; unless it could likewise with truth be affirmed—that no interest which an incumbent may have with his diocesan, can prevail upon him to withdraw it, until such facts are *fairly and fully* proved, as make it his l——p's duty

to do so. For notwithstanding a man may have no authority of his own, yet if he can upon all occasions call in *that* of another to execute his pleasure, he is to all intents and purposes as arbitrary, as if it was really vested in himself: only under such circumstances, he has this advantage — that whatever *blame* or *scandal* his actions may occasion; so ample a share of them shall not fall personally upon him, as upon the agent, by whose *immediate* or delegated authority the offence was given. His *malevolence* and *errors* will therefore in a great measure be fixed upon his powerful friend: and notwithstanding he may be sensible how much he is guilty of *both*, he will think himself little obliged to extenuate, or justify *either*; or to make any other apology for the most culpable and oppressive proceeding — than that he has followed the ADVICE AND DIRECTION OF HIS SUPERIOR.

No wonder that he shall *revere* and *magnify* an authority, which he has the art to make so subservient to his purposes! He will *bow down* and pay a *servile* homage to the hand of power, only to gain its exertion
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in his favour : and probably may be little solicitous what degree of hatred *and opprobrium* his friend may incur, so long as he can obtain the gratification of his private views, and be enabled *under his sanction* to pursue his base and malicious designs.

SHOULD the behaviour of church-men be found a confirmation of the truth of these observations, how shocking would the discovery be ! One would scarcely suppose, that *any man*, and much less those whose particular employment it is to study the scriptures, and to take *thence* their own, and to teach others their duty ; should deviate from the road of equity and conscience, into such mean and dirty paths :—that the instructors of a religion which inculcates in the *strongest manner* and from the *noblest example*, brotherly kindness and affection, and the most exalted degrees of charity, should so far forget or disregard the pattern and duties which they ought to transcribe, as to fall into practices the very reverse ; — such as would blacken the character of the most malevolent and disingenuous of mortals. Nay — if an incumbent amongst the whole clerical order could

could be found, whose pride or malice might prompt him to distress his defenceless assistant, either by exaggerating trifling causes of complaint — or making complaint, where there was *no just cause at all*: is it to be imagined, that in the whole bench of b——ps there could possibly be one so weak or so w——d, as to be made a dupe to the enmity of such a one? — to take his assertions for facts; and, without examining into the truth of things alledged, or into the character and behaviour of the person accused, to transmit to the complainant his whole power to discharge him at his pleasure; and expose him, and perhaps a family, to whatever inconveniences may be consequent upon such a dismissal.

If there is such a man — so totally devoid of a sense of humanity and justice; sadly may we lament in the words of Solomon — *I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness that iniquity was there.* (a) However such a one might raise our indignation, he would certainly stand in need of our pity and our

(a) Ecclef. iii. 16.

prayers ; that he might become truly sensible of the guilt of his wrong compliance ; and be induced to make the *best satisfaction* he is able, for the disquiet and damage which others may have sustained by it : lest he offend the judge, to whose favour his mitre and his lawn will not recommend him, and lay himself obnoxious to a most fearful sentence, from which there is no flying, nor can be any appeal : *since he must have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.* (a) And, says Solomon, *if thou seekest the oppression of the poor and violent preventing of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at it : for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.* (b)

BUT without declaring my opinion, concerning the existence of any such men :— I shall proceed to the relation of a very extraordinary transaction of which, as I had the best opportunity of obtaining a perfect knowledge, so shall I deliver it as circumstantially as I can ; — AND WITH AS MUCH SINCERITY, AS IF, AT THE CONCLUSION, I

(a) James, ii. 13.

(b) Eccles. v. 8.

WAS TO ANSWER FOR THE TRUTH OF IT,
TO THE GREAT SEARCHER OF HEARTS.

THERE were two clergymen who officiated in the same parish together for near twenty years; the one as rector, and the other as his assistant curate: they were both appointed to their respective departments, by the same ever honoured and worthy patrons; who made it a condition in giving the presentation to the living, that they would have the nomination to the curacy likewise. The person whom they were pleased to fix upon to fill this latter office, was recommended to their choice by a certain NOBLE LORD, and a commoner of great merit and ability: and as he was always happy in being distinguished with particular marks of the regard of his patrons, so upon *all occasions* he thinks himself bound in gratitude to acknowledge them.

So far it must be confessed, that there was no obligation to the rector on the side of the curate, as before they were *thus* brought together, they were perfect strangers to each other; and the advantages which either of them

them might receive from his situation, were *solely* derived from that kind hand which placed him in it. But though the curate had no obligation to the rector; the rector lay under an obligation too great to be discharged to the munificence of his patrons; who not only raised him from the place of his obscurity, where *neglect* and *contempt* had cast him, but put him into possession of one of the *most beneficial*, and *best conditioned* livings in the kingdom. Which was such an instance of favour as merited the *sincerest* *thankfulness*, and *every* expression of affection which a most grateful heart could possibly return. *

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* BUT notwithstanding this—it would, I believe, be esteemed a piece of intelligence extraordinary, if any of his most intimate friends, would be kind enough to produce one SINGLE TESTIMONY OF GRATITUDE OR DISINTERESTED AFFECTION exhibited there.

SOME men there are, who endeavour to obliterate the remembrance of a favour, because they cannot endure the thoughts of being obliged:—they have *too much pride* to acknowledge it, and *too little generosity of soul* to repay it; and therefore they strive to forget it; that their ingratitude of disposition may be as little painful to themselves as possible.—Nay, bad as this is, we sometimes find HERE and there ONE proceeding still farther; and returning ill-offices, and malevolence, for the collation

ONE would have thought, had there been the least ingenuity of sentiment in his soul, that he would have shewn himself most friendly to those, who participated in any sort the respect of his noble friends; and would have been glad of *every occasion* of testifying the grateful sense he entertained of a debt which *all* his services could never repay.

BUT how *vain* was this imagination!—and how ignorant must they be of the temper of *this man*, who could conceive it!—For he received his curate—not in such a manner as *one so appointed* had reason to look for;—but as forced upon him by a power

collation of the greatest benefits, and most signal services.—Like those people, of whom Seneca speaks,—“*that they hate the authors of their preferment because they have been witnesses of their mean condition*”—or thinking it will appear like an argument to the world, that they lie under no obligation; because they have ingratitude enough not only to disown it; but to fling in the face of their benefactors, and to treat both their names and persons with an *abusive* familiarity. But however such ingrates may desire to erase the impression of a benefit from their own minds, their behaviour will fix it the deeper in the minds of other men; and bring an imputation upon them of all other the most odious and *shameful*.—Not to return one good office for another is *inhuman*; but to return evil for good, is *diabolical*. Ingratum si dixeris, omnia dicis.

which

which he could not resist; and unto which with ease and chearfulness, he could not submit. No kind welcome and smiles, to make his change of situation pleasing and comfortable to him; but a disgusting superciliousness and a cold reserve.

THE *haughtiness and disdain*, which he manifested the first interview, and *the airs of superiority*, which he assumed upon every subsequent meeting, were sufficient to convince the curate, that no *familiarity or friendship* was to be expected there; but that he was unfortunately cast with a man, whose mind wanted ballast to keep it steady in that prosperous gale, which had blown him into so lucky an haven:—and that he was considered by him in so very inferior a capacity, that more submission and deference would be required, than was fit, either for *an ingenuous man to wish to receive, or for an ingenuous man to be willing to pay*.

AND in this painful opinion, almost every week helped to confirm him, as it furnished him with fresh demonstrations, that it was but *too well* grounded. For he was never treated by him with the least freedom or
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confidence—never but *once* in the whole year—upon christmas-day, invited to his house, whether for conversation or entertainment:—had much more duty imposed upon him than was performed by his predecessor:—and was so continually confined to constant attendance, that he could not leave his cure a *single day* in the twelve months upon any business whatever, without first procuring some friend in his absence to supply his place;—which the R. has refused to do, at a time when the C. has informed him, that he has been sent for some miles distance, to pay his last respects to a dear and dying relation—and even upon an occasion, if possible, more affecting than that.

AND all this while, not a *single act* of generosity to make this pr—de and ty—y the less insupportable: but a ten—ty and gr—ness of temper, except to those who know him, almost incredible—prevailing upon him to deny his C. who visited all the poor particularly, and was therefore best acquainted with the objects of distress, the *smallest* portion of the money offered by the commu-

communicants at the sacrament *—and even a piece of black cloth, with which the pulpit had been hung, by the surviving relations of a deceased friend.

WHAT use he makes both of one and the other, is *best* known to himself: for no body else, as far as I can learn, can give any certain account of the distribution of *either*. People are very ready at forming conjectures, God knows, not much to his reputation and

*It had heretofore been customary in the parish, where this R. and C. officiated, to divide the money given at the offertory, amounting in the year to somewhere about thirty pounds, betwixt the R. and the church-wardens, to be disposed of by them, to such pious and charitable uses, as they should think fit. But the former R. in consideration of his income being very great, and well enabling him *without such assistance* to be charitable, put his moiety into the curate's hands, that he might dispense it to the sick poor, whom he visited, as proper seasons and occasions might call upon him for it. But the present R. ever since his accession to his living, has seized it as his own property: and notwithstanding the church-wardens remonstrated to him the former practice, and the reasonableness of it, and in behalf of the C. earnestly requested that it might be continued; this was absolutely denied—with a declaration that he would dispose of it himself as he thought proper. — *A declaration that he has all along strictly adhered to.* But some of his conscientious parishioners not judging *that* proper, which perhaps might appear so to him; were so dissatisfied and offended; that they declined to make their offering at the usual time, and after the service sent it down to the C. in which number was W—m W—t, esq. and some others of inferior rank.

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advantage; and what apparent truth there is to support them, is too disagreeable a task for me to point out.

BUT this much may be affirmed without fixing an imputation upon any one—that whoever robs the poor, is a base and shameful thief indeed: but whatever clergyman shall appropriate to his own use what belongs to, and is designed for them, is, to his theft, adding a sacrilegious breach of trust, which the church has reposed in him; and which will be more scandalous and criminal, in proportion to the amplitude of that provision, which a kind providence has furnished for his support.

BUT he that is guilty, let him be ashamed and look to it! For it is both his duty and best interest to do so.

IN this manner the R. and C. travelled on in life — seldom meeting, unless by accident, but in the church; and not always there, when a meeting was expected. For the R. looked upon himself as at liberty to absent whenever he pleased; and upon the C. as always obliged to be ready and prepared

pared for duty, whenever it was his pleasure not to attend; or if to attend — not to perform any. So that the one was altogether as free from restraint and confinement, as the other was totally subject to them: and though the R. now and then read prayers in the week-days, and took part of Sunday's duty; the C. was as much necessitated to *observe time, and to make the same preparation*; as if he had been certain, that all the duty was to have been constantly performed by himself alone.

AND that from his station, it was his business, *in the R—r's opinion*, to do so, both his actions and his words fully assured him. For the R. having been absent several Sundays, without the least intimation of his intention to be so; the C. once took upon him, to request the favour of an intelligence by some of his servants, when through any indisposition — avocation — *or any other cause* he chose not to attend: but was given to understand in a *very lofty strain and manner* — “that it was people's duty in his capacity to be provided with *two* sermons every Sunday:” — and that notwithstanding there was a *resident*

incumbent, it was at his option whether he would take any share of the duty or no; and consequently that the C. was to furnish himself in the same manner, as if he was certain he would not.

AND according to this plan his behaviour was generally regulated: insomuch that upon a particular day when an occasional sermon has been necessary, and he, sometime before, has promised too to preach it; the C. has notwithstanding this, been obliged to perform that duty; although he has not received any notice of the R—r's design not to fulfil his engagement, until he has come into the church in the morning of that day in order to read prayers.

How consistent this deportment is, with the character of a christian—or a gentleman, let others find out! And whether it is reconcileable to a *suitable concern* for God Almighty's service — or is such a behaviour to a fellow-creature, as, were their conditions inverted, he would think it reasonable to receive!

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HOWEVER to this disagreeable servitude the C. was obliged to submit: and though he was not devoid either of reflexion or sensibility, he was determined to bear all imposition with as much composure as possible; and so to devote his whole time and attention to the discharge of the parochial duty, that not one of the parishioners might have any just cause for the least complaint of omission or neglect. And this, I believe, their universal suffrage will proclaim, he was happy enough to effect; as in the compass of near twenty years, he does not remember, that he was ever absent, when wanted:—nor wanted inclination when called upon, to yield them every service in his power.

BUT sometime in the spring 1767 being confined to his house by an intermitting fever, and retaining his wonted solicitude for the regular service of the church; after having procured a friend to take care of the weekly duty; he wrote to the R. (who upon account of some indisposition, *confined himself* at the same time) in the following manner.

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SIR,

SIR,

"MY indisposition will not, I fear, permit me with safety to venture out on Sunday next; I should therefore be glad to know, whether you have any reason to think better of your's: if not, how the duty of that day is to be discharged — whether it is expected that I must in *part*, or *totally* provide for it.

I am, Sir, wishing you health, &c."

THIS letter was carried up by one of his own relations, *who was entirely ignorant of the contents of it*, and delivered to the R—r's servant: from whom his master having received it, expressed himself to the bearer in these very words, or however in words to this purport; "Your F--t--r in this letter desires to know, whether he is to take care of part of the duty next Sunday, or all of it—which is quite out of the question: *for it is his business as Cu— to take care of it all.*"

THIS answer being communicated to the Cu— (which must *most certainly* be given by the R—, as the bearer could not otherwise have had any knowledge of the contents of the

the letter*) astonished and shocked him greatly :—that a man who had taken upon him the care of the souls in a parish; and upon

* THIS parenthesis, I could wish to have particularly noticed; as it must effectually wipe off any imputation from the reputation of the bearer, whom the R— with great assiduity and unkindness has endeavoured to asperse;—asserting that what she delivered to the C. was not his answer; but a forgery of her own. Now not to insist upon the improbability of such a forgery, as there could not be the least temptation upon any account whatever for her to be guilty of it: yet the thing itself must be allowed to be utterly impossible—as she was entirely ignorant of the contents and purport of the letter, until she received from the R. a verbal answer to it. And besides, such a declaration is quite compatible with his whole behaviour: and is the very sense of the following words in that letter, wherein he acquaints the C. with his discharge, viz—“ *as you will not perform that QUANTITY of duty I expect from my assistant curate (which by the by was the whole duty of the parish if he was pleased to expect it) I do give you notice that I will discharge you from my curacy in three months from the delivery of this letter.* What an air of absolute authority is this! and what a deplorable state of servility and dependence are curates reduced! —But it is vain to pretend to deny, what our actions continually prove: since our sentiments will best be collected from our behaviour, and every declaration which contradicts *this* must have little weight.

BUT if a man becomes sensible of an error in his judgment; let him honestly retract it! This indicates a generous and noble disposition.—Or if upon mature consideration he thinks he is right; let him stand up like a man in support of his opinion! and scorn to have recourse to *falsities* and *evasions*—the base trick and refuge of COWARDS AND VILLAINS.

upon that consideration received many hundreds a year from it, should pronounce himself *totally disengaged* from all obligation to pay any regard to the duties of it; is such a palpable repugnancy to common sense; that I dare venture to affirm, there is not an honest *layman* in the kingdom of England, that will not condemn it both as impious and unreasonable.

AND besides, whether we suppose, that the supply was to be obtained through interest, or for reward; the R. one would be apt to think, was better qualified to procure it upon *either* terms, than was the C. and therefore it was hard and unkind to impose the task upon him of getting two gentlemen to officiate, (for one he had got) when with so much greater facility, we may imagine, he could have called in one or more.

THE answer therefore appeared to him as favouring much of *impiety* and *inhumanity*:

THIS is a mean and infamous practice at any time; but receives great aggravations, when it is calculated to blacken and ruin the character of an innocent person. *The lip of truth,* says Solomon, *shall be established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

and

and as he was unable personally to wait upon the R. to expostulate with him concerning it, he was obliged to content himself with conveying his sentiments upon paper in the following words.

S I R,
“THE answer you have been pleased to send by my d——r implying in it *no obligation* on your side to take care of the church at all, but the *whole of the duty* thereto belonging, as resting *entirely* upon me; is such a declaration, I must presume to say, as would have been as little expected from a christian divine, as it is astonishing to one to hear it. Conscience surely can dictate no such language — sober reason must disclaim it — and the canons of the church, I am certain, authorize no such sentiments, nor proceedings — but the reverse.

I SHALL do whatever I can in the time of my sickness, as I have always done in the time of my health, that every parochial duty may be regularly discharged: and if in any instance there happens to be a failure, *as it shall not be owing to any want of care in me; so*
shall

shall I be ready to justify my conduct before any superior, whose legal right I acknowledge, to call me to any account. When I came to St—k—t, it was not to undertake the whole duty of the parish, but to be an *assistant* to the incumbent in the discharge of it: and I must beg leave to say, I look upon myself at present in no other capacity: and for the future shall not submit so passively to the *heavy load* I have hitherto quietly drudged under, without some better encouragement than I have ever yet experienced. Oppression will make a wise man mad: and how long I may retain my senses, I know not; — but of oppression, the whole town is ready to attest, I have had a deal. You must excuse me, if I make this matter publick, as I fear neither blame, nor shame in it: and whether I shall confine the publication of it to the town, I am not yet determined.

I am, &c. ”

WHAT effect this letter had upon the R——r's mind, the C. was for some time at a loss to guess: for as no answer was returned —nor any notice taken of it by the R. when upon

upon their recovery they met as usual; he could not certainly know, whether it had hurt his *pride* or his *conscience* most;—whether it had provoked his resentment, or convinced him of his error. And as it was undoubtedly the R——r's business to rejoin; and to revive the subject, if he judged it of consequence enough to merit his notice; the C. for fear of being charged with impertinence, or a desire to renew and heighten a difference, in a little time banished it his mind, and thought no more about it.

BUT notwithstanding the R. was silent to the C. he was extremely busy in another quarter; and had, it seems, too implacable a spirit of revenge to rest satisfied, until as far as he had power, he had completed his ruin for such a supposed indignity. For this purpose, with the utmost secrecy he transmitted his letter, with, one may suppose, his own justification and comment upon it, to a CERTAIN MAN IN HIGH STATION: who without looking farther into the affair—without asking the C. any one question relative to it—without paying any regard to his regular and constant attendance upon his duty—without

without considering the indisposition he laboured under at the time the letter was wrote—or without any feelings for the pain he might give him, or for any inconveniences he might bring upon his family;—very complaisantly sacrificed every consideration to the *satisfaction* of a rich incumbent—giving his advice, (with which, no doubt, his power must be supposed to be conveyed) to discharge him from his curacy, at three months notice whenever he pleased.

HAD the C—te's crime been ever so punishable, I hope, one may without offence, desire to know, how such a method of proceeding is to be justified upon the common principles of equity and conscience?—In an ignominious manner to turn a man out of his office, *before he was apprised of any design*, or had any charge to his *knowledge* exhibited against him;—and consequently before he could have an opportunity of representing his own case, or of alledging the truth in his own vindication; seems to shew such a precipitancy *at least* in the adm—n of j—ce, as I must think an honest Hottentott would b—h to hear.

WHEN

WHEN the persecuting Jews by grievous complaints and importunity, (a) endeavoured to extort a sentence of condemnation against the apostle St. Paul; the heathen Festus could check the impetuosity of their malice, with this just observation and rebuke—*It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before he which is accused, have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself, concerning the crime laid against him.* This is the language of an heathen governor;—and a language too so absolutely agreeable to the dictates of natural justice, that every honest mind must applaud its reasonableness. What excuse then could be made, for the precipitancy and partiality of any christian governor; who, without having the parties *face to face, or giving the accused license to answer for himself*, should take his guilt for granted, and punish him accordingly?

WHOEVER is accused of an act of the vilest delinquency, surely should be heard previous to his condemnation:—it is the practised method in our courts of judicature

(a) Acts, xxv. 7.

—and

—and must always be the method, where truth and justice are the objects of enquiry.

OR is any letter, said to be written by him, ever so pregnant with expressions—false and affrontive :—this letter, before any punishment is inflicted upon the account of it, should be fairly proved to be his writing ;—the true meaning of it, and the *occasion* of its being wrote, fully investigated—and the character and situation of the person sending, as well as of the person to whom it was sent, candidly examined into :—otherwise what an encouragement is *here* given to a base and malevolent mind, if its representations are to be credited without doubt or enquiry, to bring disgrace and ruin upon, it may be, a worthy and innocent neighbour ?

THE representations may be *true*, and they may be *otherwise* : the parties may be in *reality* as they are depicted, and they may be the *reverse*. However this is well known, that many things upon *examination*, appear different to what they did at first view. When the motives and ends of the agents are searched into, actions often assume a contrary aspect : and blame is not seldom found *solely* attributable to the man, who, from his

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own stating of the case, would have been thought inculpable.

BUT probably some may be so prejudiced in favour of the opulent, as always to conclude, that right and riches must necessarily be on the same side of the question; and that where Providence has denied the latter, it seldom bestows either common sense, or common honesty: and that such a one in every dispute with a superior, must, *for that reason*, be judged to be in the wrong.

BUT however wrong the C. may be deemed by such *reasoners as these*; there are others, who, notwithstanding all their riches, will never be able to convince the world, that they have done right—in treating a man *unheard* not only as guilty—but—of the worst of crimes: and in inflicting a punishment accordingly of the severest nature; such as only the *grossest negligence* in duty, or *immorality in life*, could possibly deserve.

BUT leaving the R——r's representation, and those to whom he made it, to the mercy of a rational-judging world:—let us proceed to the C——te's letter itself, which has
given

given so much offence to the R. that nothing can erase the impression, or atone for it; but, as far as he is able to bring it about,—the destruction of the writer, and his innocent dependents.

Now it is very obvious to observe, that the letter is wrote upon the R——r's declaration; that the duty of the parish *wherein he resided* was not incumbent upon him, but entirely upon the C.; who was obliged personally himself to discharge it; or, *even if sick*, under a necessity to provide somebody that would.

Now give me leave to ask, whether this is language becoming the R. of a parish—or fit for a B——p to hear and tolerate? Can the tithes be supposed to be due to a R. merely for putting in a substitute? What occasion then for his being in orders?—since a lay-R——r might do a business of this sort altogether as well.—And can he, to whom the care of souls is entrusted, divest himself justifiably of all care concerning them? What becomes of the vows and promises he has made before God in his church?—And what regard is paid to those pressing and solemn injunctions

injunctions in scripture, which oblige to a contrary practice?

I SHALL give you some part of the opinion of the late pious Bp. Burnet in this matter; who, both from his station and learning, deserves the utmost deference: and what he says, will, I hope, silence, if not reform those for whose use it was intended; as well as afford me a singular pleasure, that I can, in confirmation of the reasonableness of my own sentiments, produce such unquestionable authority. And if the quotation seems something long, I have no apology to make for this—that as it is so very pertinent and proper, I thought it could not be read over too often; and that some perhaps, for whose benefit it was designed, would not take pains to look for it in the author. “Bare residence,” says he, “without *labouring*, is but a *mock* residence; since the obligation to it, is in order to a farther end;—that they (the clergy) may watch over and feed their flock, and not enjoy their benefices only as farms, or as livings, according to the gross, but common abuse of our language, by which the names of cures, parishes, or benefices

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which are the ecclesiastical names, are now swallowed up into *that* of living, which carries a carnal idea in the sound of the word, and, I doubt, a more carnal effect on the minds of both clergy and laity.

WHATEVER we may be, our church is free of this reproach; since this charge (meaning the charge in the office for the ordination of priests, which it would do well if every incumbent would *seriously* revise; as I fear, there may be many who have never seen—nor heard—nor thought of it, since they were ordained) carries their duty as high and as home as any thing that can be conceived in words. And it is farther to be considered, that this is not of the nature of a private exhortation, in which a man of lively thought and a warm fancy may be apt to carry the point too high; it is the constant and uniform voice of the church. Nor is it of the nature of a charge, which is only the sense of him that gives it, and to which the person to whom it is given is only passive: he hears it, but cannot be bound by another man's thoughts or words, further than as the nature of things binds him. But orders are

of the nature of a covenant between Christ and the clerks, in which so many privileges and powers are granted on the one part, and so many duties and offices are promised on the other; and this charge being the preface to it, it is stipulatory. It declares the whole covenant of both sides; *and so those who receive orders upon it, are as much bound by every part of it, and it becomes as much their own act, as if they had promised it all in the most formal words that could be:* and indeed the answers and promises that are afterwards made, are only the application of this to particular persons, for giving them a plainer and livelier sense of their obligation, which yet in itself, was as entire and strong, whether they had made any promise by words of their own or not.

BUT to put the matter out of doubt, let us look a little farther into the office, to the promises that they make with relation to their flock, even to such as are, or shall be committed to their charge. They promise, *that by the help of the Lord, they will give their faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrine and sacraments and the discipline of*

Christ as the Lord hath commanded, and as this realm hath received the same, according to the commandment of God; so that they may teach the people committed to their care and charge, with all diligence to keep and observe the same.

THIS does plainly bind to *personal labour*. And again, the clerk says, *he will by the help of God, be ready with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God's word, and to use both publick and private admonitions and exhortations, as well to the sick, as to the whole within his cure, as need shall require, and as occasion shall be given. This is as plainly personal and constant as words can make any thing.*

IN the next place they promise, *that they will be diligent in prayers, and in reading the holy scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh.* This still carries on that great notion of the pastoral care, which runs through this whole office; that it is to be a man's *entire* business, and is to possess both his thoughts and his time. They

do further promise, *that they will maintain and set forward as much as lieth in them, quietness, peace, and love among all christian people, and especially among them that are, or shall be committed to their charge.*

THESE are the vows and promises that priests make before they can be ordained. And to complete the stipulation, the bishop concludes it with a prayer to God, *who has given them the will to do all these things, to give them also strength and power to perform the same; that he may accomplish his work that he hath begun in them, until the time that he shall come in the latter day to judge the quick and the dead.* Upon the whole matter, says the bishop, either this is all a piece of *gross and impudent pageantry*, dressed up in grave and lofty expressions, to strike upon the weaker part of mankind, and to furnish the rest with matter to their prophane and impious scorn; or it must be confessed, that priests come under the most formal and express engagements—to *constant and diligent labour*, that can possibly be contrived or set forth in words. It is upon this, that they are ordained; so their ordination being the

consummation of this compact, it must be acknowledged that, according to the nature of all mutual compacts, a total failure on the one side, does also dissolve all the obligation that lay on the other: and therefore those who do not perform that part, that do not *reside and labour*, they do also in the sight of God forfeit all the authority and privileges that do follow their orders; as much as a christian at large, that does not perform his baptismal vow, forfeits the rights and benefits of his baptism in the sight of God.*

—And in another place, † the bishop having cited numerous texts of scripture, to prove, that *constant and personal labour* is required by God in the ministers of the gospel, proceeds in this manner:

“ I THINK it is as plain as words can make any thing, that such as are dedicated to the service of God and of his church, ought to *labour constantly and faithfully*. For it is not possible to express a personal obligation, in terms that are both more strict and more solemn, than these are which have been cited and all the *returns of obedience and submission*, &c.

* Bishop Burnet's Pastoral Care, p. 102. et seq.

† p. 44
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esteem and support (since it is a maxim founded upon natural equity, THAT THE BENEFICE IS GIVEN FOR THE OFFICE) being declared to be due to them on the account of their *watching over, and feeding the flock of God*; those who pretend to these without considering themselves as under *the other obligation*, are guilty of the worst sort of sacrilege, in devouring things that are sacred, without doing those duties for which these are due; and what right soever the law of the land may give them to them, yet certainly according to the divine law, those *who do not wait at the altar, ought not to be partakers with the altar*: those *who do not minister about holy things, ought not to live of the things of the temple*: nor ought those who do not *preach the gospel, to live of the gospel.*"

THUS you see the opinion of a learned and pious prelate in this matter;—and upon what authority that opinion is founded;—being the most indisputable that can possibly be produced—the ordination compact of priests, and the word of God.

AND how far the canons of our church interfere

terfere in this matter, they will best speak for themselves.

THE 45th. canon runs thus :—“ Every beneficed man allowed to be a preacher, and residing on his benefice, having no lawful impediment, shall in his own cure, or in some other church or chapel where he may conveniently, near adjoining, where no preacher is, preach ONE SERMON EVERY SUNDAY OF THE YEAR ; wherein he shall soberly and sincerely divide the word of truth, to the glory of God, and to the best edification of his people. ”

AND to prevent all excuse which *indolence* or *pride* might be apt to make for the omission of this duty, where together with a beneficed preacher there is an assistant curate stationed :—the 56th. canon very plainly assigns to them both their respective offices ; and gives the preacher to understand, that though the duty of preaching is *solely* * his,

*SOLELY I say, — because every beneficed and resident preacher being obliged to preach one Sermon every Sunday and no more—when the canons were framed, being enjoined or expected ; of consequence the duty of preaching must solely be his. The afternoon sermon has been since introduced by

it is not all that is required of him ; but that he is further under obligation to read prayers, and administer the sacraments, at least as often in a year as that canon enjoins. Take the words of the canon — “ Every minister being possessed of a benefice, that hath cure and charge of souls, *although he chiefly attend to preaching*, and hath a curate under him to execute the *other duties* which are to be performed for him in the church, shall twice at the least every year read himself the divine service upon two several Sundays publickly, and at the usual times, both in the forenoon and afternoon in the church which he so possesseth ; and shall likewise as often in every year administer the sacraments ;—*upon pain of suspension.*” Words—as plainly declaratory to whom the duty of preaching belongs, as

the unauthorised fancies of perhaps well-designing men, and has entirely expelled those catechetical lectures which before were in use : and whose use both the laws of the land and of the church give a sanction to. This sermon however seems now to be customary, and probably may be continued : “ though it has, (says archbishop Wake) quite thrown out the much better and more profitable exercise of catechising, which has both the laws of the realm and the canons of the church on its side ; WHEREAS THE OTHER HAS NEITHER.”

Wake in his address to his Clergy prefixed to his Comment.
upon the *Church Catech.*

well

well as of the offices of an assistant curate, as can well be devised. For the term *chiefly* here, has no reference to any other person, who was to participate with him in the duty of preaching: but to convince him, that though this duty was *wholly* his, it was not the *whole* that belonged to him; but that, notwithstanding the curate was engaged in performing the other offices of the parish, this did not totally exempt him from all concern and share in them.

AND there is *at least some appearance of reason*, why the duty of preaching should be confined to the incumbent; — not only because it might be thought, that a proper attention to the other parochial duties, might occasion too many interruptions to the curate in his preparations for such a business: but because from the incumbent's superior preferment; his superior abilities might perhaps be presumed; and that as he had more leisure for *application*, so had he more *learning* to qualify him for a work, which, if well executed, requires a considerable portion of both.

AND if there are so many, and such strong obligations on incumbents to attend to parochial

chial duty,—and particularly to that part of it which consists in preaching the word of God; must it not argue either great *ignorance* or great *wickedness* in any, to pretend that they are under no obligation at all?—That as they keep a curate (as with ostentation enough it is often called; though, God knows, it is generally rather a *starving* him) the whole of the duty is devolved upon him; and that themselves have a right to decline either *all*, or what part of the duty they please, as *indolence* or *pride* may sue for a gratification.

BUT pray, let me ask! whence is derived this right which is so much talked of?—Neither from the church, nor from heaven, I am certain: (for their decisions and injunctions will *always* and *in every thing* I hope, be the same) and unless a particular dispensation from these quarters granted to them can be produced, the obligations from both must remain in full force and virtue. For the commands in scripture are personally to be applied to them:—and the vows and promises they made at their ordination are personal engagements; and under their circumstances,

cumstances, it is not in their power to dissolve, and transfer them, unto another person.

IT is not in this case, as in agreements betwixt man and man, which are no longer binding than the parties chuse to have them so: since here the obligation arises from their mutual consent, which from the like mutual consent, may be cancelled at pleasure. But the other is a matter, not betwixt an incumbent and his curate; but **BETWIXT AN INCUMBENT AND HIS GOD:** his obligation receives its validity from his *Maker's will and his own consent*; and all the powers upon earth cannot exempt him from it, whilst he remains in the capacity of a pastor of a flock, and a curator of souls.

LET incumbents then consider themselves in this light, which IS REALLY THE TRUE ONE; and let them judge whether they think themselves at liberty to attend parochial duty or not! And if they are not too blind to discern their obligation; let them ruminate a little upon that being which has imposed it upon them! And surely they will not look upon themselves as too great to yield obedience to him; nor to acquit themselves,

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like honest men, in discharging those most solemn engagements, which they have voluntarily entered into.

BUT if their pride will not suffer them to submit to the decisions of heaven ; nor their indolence, through any distant apprehension, be roused into action : let them then feel that coercive power which the church has ordained for such audacious contemners of its laws ! For when laws are not only disregarded, but their obvious meaning perverted, or their validity denied ; it is high time for the hand of authority to interpose.

THERE is a wide difference betwixt conniving at a transgressor, and permitting him publicly to avow that he is none :—betwixt forbearing to inflict a punishment upon him, and suffering him to triumph in a defiance of all power to do so : the former may be many times done without much injury either to the laws, or to authority ; but the latter has a manifest tendency to bring them *both* into utter contempt. And a magistrate, who shall upon such an occasion refrain, *or be afraid* to exert himself, betrays the honor of law and government, and renders the best wisdom

wisdom and care of legislators ineffectual and vain. For when offenders act in this sort, it is something like declaring war against the law; which must then either stand up in its own defence, or all the barriers betwixt right and wrong will be thrown down, and an *open* made for the entrance of every kind of violence and oppression.

AND so when an incumbent, shall not only decline the performance of his duty; but in opposition to the plain sense of his solemn engagements — of the will and commands of God — and of the canons of the church, shall declare, that, if he pleases to think so, he has no duty to perform: is it not fit, that his mistake should be rectified and the practice of his duty enforced upon him? An indulgence to such a man, besides the bad effects already mentioned which will naturally flow from it, not only gives him an encouragement to mal-treat his fellow-creature, but is attended with many ill consequences to religion itself. For as my favourite author * observes in his epistle dedicatory to the late Queen Ann — “the live

* Bp. Burnet.

and manners of men will most effectually be reformed by obliging the clergy to be more exemplary in their lives, and more *diligent* and *faithful* in the discharge of the pastoral care."

WHICH very probably might be in a great measure brought about, if such infringements of the canons as I have been speaking of, were taken serious cognizance of by those, who, as the civil magistrate is of the statute, are the executors of the canon-law.

AND in what manner they are called upon by that royal authority which confirmed and ratified it, I must beg leave to transcribe:—
 For after giving orders that the book of canons is to be provided at the charge of every parish; "It straitly chargeth and commandeth all arch-bishops, bishops, and all other that exercise any ecclesiastical jurisdiction within this realm, every man in his place, to see and procure (so much as in them lieth) all and every of the same canons, orders, ordinances, and constitutions, to be in *all points* duly observed; not sparing to execute the penalties in them severally mentioned, upon any that shall wittingly, or wilfully break, or
neglect

neglect to observe the same, as they tender the honor of God, the peace of the church, the tranquility of the kingdom, and their duty and service to us their king and sovereign.

In witness, &c."

FROM what has been said, I flatter myself, it will evidently appear, to every thinking, unprejudiced mind; that a DECLARATION FROM A BENEFICED AND RESIDENT PREACHER, implying in it, that the duty of his parish is not obligatory and incumbent upon him—but altogether upon his assistant curate—is inconsistent with conscience—with reason—and with the canons of our church: and so far the curate's observations in his letter seem sufficiently proved.

AND the paragraph following in the same letter, if duly and dispassionately considered, will be found so far from meriting blame, that it indicates a disposition and determination of mind highly laudable. "I shall do," says he, "*whatever I can* in the time of my sickness, as I have *always* done in the time of my health, that every parochial duty may be

be regularly discharged; and if in any instance there shall happen to be a failure, *as it shall not be owing to any want of care in me*, so shall I be ready to justify my conduct before any superior, whose legal right, I acknowledge to call me to any account."

Now what construction can possibly be put upon these words, by any person, who has the least pretensions to candour, that will not redound to the credit and advantage of the writer?—For the C. upon receiving the answer before-mentioned from the R. took for granted that the whole of the Sunday's duty was to be provided for by himself; and accordingly he here declares, that he will do all in his power for that purpose; and that if he should not be able to compass his design, *it should not be owing to any want of care in him*: but if there should happen to be any part of the duty omitted; that is, if service or sermon either end of the day was not performed, as he might not be able to procure gentlemen to do the common duty of the whole day; he did not at all doubt, but as his sickness, being an act of God, would excuse him in the sight of heaven; so it like-

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wife would before an earthly authority. I do not see what other meaning can, consistently with *common sense*, and the *evident design* of the letter, be put upon this part of it: nor consequently, what room there can be for the least censure or blame: unless it can first be proved, that a man is bound to do more than his abilities enable him—and that when Providence has taken from him the power, his obligation to act still remains.

HAD the C. sent word to the R. that he would not give himself any trouble or concern about the duty—and that it was altogether indifferent to him, whether it was performed or not: this might have betrayed a reprehensible disregard to the sacred offices, and have furnished matter for an allegation against him. But when, notwithstanding he was sensible of the *unreasonableness* of the answer, he returns an assurance, that every thing within the compass of his *utmost ability* shall be done;—and that where his ability shall be found inadequate to the exigency, he will, if complaint shall be made, submit his cause to an equitable and authorised judge:—what could he better—or indeed otherwise

therwise have said?—unless the clergymen in the neighbourhood had been all at his command; and he could have summoned them into his service at pleasure, and appointed them according to his will their portion of duty.

If preaching in the forenoon was the R——'s business (as I think I have fully proved) why was he not to take care of it?—And if he was not able himself to perform it, why was he not to procure a person that would? Certainly this would have been more reasonable, than to impose this difficulty upon another; to whom *that sermon at least*, did not belong.

HAD the C. been in health, he would readily have complied with the imposition at this time, as he had done times *almost without number* before: but as circumstances then stood—if the R. had a right to act as he did, it will not be easy to reconcile his behaviour to the principles of *humanity* and *brotherly love*: but upon supposition that he had no right at all, it can be denominated nothing less than tyranny and oppression.

WHEN the C. came to the place where he

was to officiate, it was, as he told the R. in his letter, *not to undertake the whole duty of the parish, but to be an assistant to the incumbent in the discharge of it.* He took the curacy upon the same terms, both as to labour and profit, as his predecessor had before: and as there was no mention of any alteration to be made, I fancy, it will be allowed, he had reason to do so.

UPON consideration indeed of his being fixed in it by the same honoured patrons, from whom the R. under providence derived all his worldly felicity and *importance*; it was (as I before remarked) universally expected by every one, to whom this was known, that *for their sakes* he would fare the better; and in gratitude to them receive every reasonable testimony of civility and favour. But instead of this, soon after his settling in his cure, he was given to understand, that more duty, and a more constant attendance were expected from him, than from the person whom he succeeded. Prayers, he was told, which used to be read only twice in the week, except in *that* preceding the sacrament; were now to be read every day; (with

(with some other innovations, which, though very disagreeable to the C. are too trifling to be particularly specified here) to which the C. very chearfully agreed; but observed, that as it was an additional *labour* and *attendance*; and in point of appearance would occasion some additional expence; he hoped, it would entitle him to some addition in his salary.

BUT to this remonstrance no regard was paid: infomuch that the C. has upon this occasion been constant in his attendance for near twenty years; and has never upon *that* or *any other account* received the least acknowledgment from the R. whether *verbal* or *pecuniary*, in his whole life. This is observed to the honor of his generosity, of which *in talk* no man loves to make more parade.

Now whoever is acquainted with the qualities that constitute the character of an oppressor, and can define in what acts oppression consists; he surely needs not be long at a loss to find out both the agent and the patient, both the person that has oppressed, and the person that has suffered oppression.

AND let every man, against whose practice this wo in Jeremiah is denounced, attend to it, and tremble?—*Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong : THAT USETH HIS NEIGHBOURS SERVICE WITHOUT WAGES, AND GIVETH HIM NOT FOR HIS WORK : That saith, I will build me a wide house, and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows, and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and JUSTICE, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well with him : WAS NOT THIS TO KNOW ME, saith the Lord?(a)*

BUT however justifiable the curate's letter may be, when the occasion of its being wrote is fully and fairly considered;—the R. it seems, terms it insolent; and very liberally charges the writer of it with impertinence and pride.

THESE are words, no doubt, which have a meaning; but are oftentimes very impro-

(a) Jerem. xxii. 13, &c.

perly applied : being made use of, more to silence a supposed inferior, than to convince him of any error, of which he may have been guilty : and are designed to raise disagreeable ideas in the minds of others, concerning an innocent and perhaps an injured person, in order to throw an odium upon him, which probably would otherwise fall, where it was better deserved. The rich man, and the man in power, scruple not many times to oppress their poor neighbours ; who, upon any remonstrance, or attempt to redress themselves, are immediately denominated *insolent* and *impertinent* : their complaints however just are retorted with such opprobrious language ; which oftentimes in the mouth of a superior, has no other meaning than this — *I will do whatever I please, and it is your duty to acquiesce in whatever I please to do.* The honest tradesman, after having given credit to the ruin of his peace of mind, and almost of his circumstances too, is, for a modest demand of his own, dismissed like an *INSOLENT AND AN IMPERTINENT FELLOW*; and an unbeneficed ecclesiastick for a spirited remonstrance to an *over-bearing R.* occasioned by a declaration and a designed imposition, which,

if I prophecy aright, will transmit his name to posterity with all THE HONOR IT DESERVES, has his honest indignation miscalled—insolence and impertinence.

BUT it is a matter of indifferency, how freely such men may use these terms, whilst they have no *just* application to the person to whom they are directed. They are rather to be looked upon as a kind of *scurrilous artillery*, which such people play off in order to keep their enemies at an awful distance; well knowing, that, if they permit them to come to close quarters, they shall, through the *badness* of their cause, and the *weakness* of their defence, be shamefully defeated and exposed.

BAD language is so far from aiding, that it always hurts the side it would be understood to serve: and reason and truth appear to the best advantage, when set off and supported with candour and coolness. For reproachful terms prove nothing but the want of argument, and, perhaps of good-breeding in him who uses them: as if the deficiency of understanding was to be supplied by abusive words; and what a man could not rationally confute

confute, he must endeavour to misconstrue and asperse. For truth alters not its nature because advanced by an inferior: and in matters of justice, it is the thing itself, and not the person, which ought to be the *sole* object of attention.

BETWIXT whomsoever then a dispute may happen; let ingenuity acknowledge what is reason and truth; or let honesty disprove it! but let no man think to silence the injured and affronted by adding abusive words to abusive actions! for as no difference of fortune can authorise one man to impose upon another: so is there no reason, why that other should be deprived of the liberty of properly resenting or representing his grievance, whenever he becomes sensible of it: and whoever asserts the contrary of these, seems no better than a tyrant, that wishes to reduce mankind into a state of the basest servility:—a state, unto which, no man who has discernment to distinguish a wrong, and resolution to seek for redress, will ever submit: and whatever epithets may be due to such a one for a temper and behaviour like this; they, who would impose upon him
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the former, or deny him the latter, can have little pretensions to the character either of a christian or a gentleman.

AND as to the imputation of pride, which the R. would gladly fix upon the C; this is only the effects of pique and resentment, because he has not received that servile homage and submission, which probably he may imagine to be his due from one, whom he considers only in the number of his servants. The compliment of the hat, and precedence, the C. always gratified his vanity with; and as to any thing farther he was not sensible that it was necessary, or could reasonably be expected.

BUT before a determination in this case can be made concerning the justice of such a charge, it should first be known what *kind* and *degree* of submission the R. expects—and upon what right and reasons those expectations are founded.

“AMONG the many imputations,” says Mr. Seed, “which we are willing to fasten upon those whom we have an aversion to, that of pride, is, I think, one of the most common. Now, if we would examine the innermost

innermost recesses of the mind, I doubt we should often find, that our own pride is the cause, why we tax others with it. Men elate with the thoughts of their own sufficiency, are ever imagining, that others are wanting in their regards to them; and therefore very apt to conclude, that pride must be the cause, why they withhold from them that respect, which they have an unquestionable right to in their own opinion."

So that before a man condemns another for not treating him according to his deserts, he should be certain of the reality of those deserts, upon which his claim to respect is built: otherwise by over-rating his own qualities, and depreciating those of others, he may make an estimate in his own favour, that has nothing to support it but a vain and idle fancy: and consequently under such a delusion, must meet with frequent disappointments and vexation; whilst he appears respectable *only* in his own eye, and stands distinguished in the eye of the world for his vanity and folly.

BUT in the case before us, let us examine a little upon what accounts the R. thinks himself

himself entitled to such extraordinary respect and deference from his C—. If it be remembered what has been before observed, concerning the persons from whom the C. received his appointment; it must be allowed, that there is no obligation to the R. upon that consideration.

AND with regard to his office, as a *minister* and *ambassador of Christ* and a *steward of the mysteries of God*, there can be no pretence to any superiority:—the curates power and authority in the church being equal to his—his commission received from the same quarter—and his ministration in holy things as valid and efficacious. For, as in Dr. Potter's church government, it is observed, as a proof of the equality of bishops; that as they are the successors of the apostles, who were all distinguished by the same common name—had all the same instructions and commission given them—were all alike admitted to be attendants on Christ—were authorised alike to preach the gospel—and without a difference, have twelve thrones appointed them, in which they are to judge the twelve tribes of Israel; so were they, like their predecessors

sors of equal power and authority. One bishop might excel another in the extent of his diocese, in the number and quality of christians under his care, or in outward splendour and magnificence; but to apply St. Jerom's words in this case — "wherever a bishop is, whether at Rome, or at Eugubium, at Constantinople, or at Regium, at Alexandria, or at Tani, he has the same merit and the same priesthood. Neither the power of riches, nor abasement of poverty, makes a bishop higher or lower, but they are all successors of the apostles."

AND so in the order of priests, whether they have preferment or they have none; whether they have barely a competency or they have an affluence; they are all with respect to their function upon the same level—are all servants to the same Lord;—are all fellow-labourers in the vineyard of Christ, and workers together in the same common vocation:—only to encourage their assiduity and care, they that labour the more abundantly, shall the more abundantly partake a glorious recompense at the right hand of the throne of God.

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SOME indeed are more fortunately placed, and enjoy more worldly conveniences and advantages, than others ; but though these things may yield a personal satisfaction to their owners, they add nothing to their office, or to their real merit ; and all the external respect that is paid to men so placed, is but a voluntary offering, which cannot at any time be demanded ; as being no more than an act of mere courtesy and complaisance, to be tendered, or withheld at pleasure.

As to those clergymen, who, for the maintenance of discipline and government, may in acts respecting these be invested with particular powers ; whatever deference from their brethren they may stand entitled unto, is not due to them for their own sakes, but for the sake of those whom they personate. They are delegated by a superior order, whose commission and authority they bear, and that submission which the originals may claim, is paid to them in these their representatives. But in rectors, vicars, and curates as the office is altogether the same, so is the honor attending it equally belonging to them all : whether therefore they are called upon

upon to officiate in the city, or in the town ; at the court or in the country ; they have all with respect to their function the same *merit*, and the same *priesthood*: “ infomuch that neither the power of riches, nor the abasement of poverty, makes them higher or lower,” being all of the same order, and upon the same level. *

BUT

* THE distinctions which are made in our liturgy amongst the clergy, are of bishops, priests, and deacons—and of bishops and curates : the latter distinction we find, not only in the prayer for the whole state of Christ’s church militant in earth ; but in the order of morning and evening prayer throughout the year. And in my opinion, it would be an unjust reflexion upon the compilers of our liturgy, to suppose this a mere casual insertion—put there without any particular view and intendment. Such a wise and pious body of men, as were those to whom we are indebted for the composition of our publick offices, had, no doubt, reasons and design *for*, and *in*, all their compositions ; and they seem so evident in the denominations here specified, that it must appear perverse and ridiculous to deny or dispute them. The names are declarative of the offices, and set forth the *duty* of those persons who are appointed to them : that every time they offer up their prayers (which the church supposes should be twice every day) they may be reminded of the obligation they lie under to a faithful discharge of it. By the word bishop, from its etymological signification, is to be understood (from *Επισκοπος*) an overseer—inspector—and superintendent ; and should put *them* in remembrance, with whom so great a trust is reposed, how highly it is incumbent upon them, with *assiduity* and *fidelity* to attend to the doctrine

BUT notwithstanding the R. and C. may be upon the same footing with regard to their office; there are distinctions which are in themselves respectable, and give a clergyman a kind of pre-eminence over his brethren—such are the degrees conferred in the universities, as testimonies of the approbation of those learned bodies—and intellectual qualifications and abilities, which one man may possess in a degree superior to another:

trine and manners of every clergyman in the diocese, over which the providence of God has placed them; and as well to encourage and reward, as far as they are able, the conscientious and attentive amongst them; as to admonish and censure the immoral and remiss. And in the word CURATE, not only both the other inferior orders of priest and deacon are included but every rector and vicar (who otherwise must stand excluded the prayers of the church) as well as those to whom the name of curate is now generally confined: and by it is plainly implied, the necessity they *all* lie under of attending to the care and salvation of souls; which, as it is their proper business, so ought it to be their daily solicitude and employment. Every curate, it is true, is not a vicar or a rector; but every vicar and rector is designed, and *ought* to be in the *full* meaning of the word a CURATE. And this, our church very reasonably supposes to be the case; and therefore piously offers up her daily supplications to heaven, that God would be pleased to *pour down the continual dew of his blessing* upon their endeavours, that they may redound as well to their own, as to the benefit and felicity of those *committed to their charge*.

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—and I should not even scruple to add riches too,—if they could with any justness be looked upon as either the *reward* or *proof* of merit. But these are perhaps as often the portion of the worthless, as of the worthy—of the vile, as of the virtuous : and though any man on whom they are bestowed, may, by their aid and influence render himself respectable ; no man will ever be so, merely for the possession of them. For what signifies any man's riches—but to himself, if no body but himself is to be the better for them ?—If they do not feed, and clothe, and administer to the comfort of, other people, it is the same to them, as if he had them not : and however a fear of him may make them pay external obeisance, and *give good words with their lips* ; they will in their hearts condemn him, and in secret load him with execrations. For whilst a man is performing a part which renders him odious in the sight of God, he can never appear amiable in the eye of the world ; and until he answers the end which a kind providence intended by entrusting such a talent to his care, he has as little reason to expect a cordial esteem

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from men, as he has—favour hereafter in heaven.

WHETHER the R. may think submission his due, upon account of riches, I know not ; for riches no doubt he has, as it seems to have been his principal desire and endeavour to procure them : but then these alone, according to my way of arguing, are not sufficient to entitle him to it : he should, if his heart would permit him, be generous likewise :—but of his generosity, I must, however reluctantly, profess myself unable to say any thing, *having never seen, nor heard any specimens of it.* It is however very likely, that as his riches give him a consequence in his own opinion, he may think they ought to do so in the opinion of other men ; expecting—*like a false jewel among ignorant people, to derive a value from his being set in gold.* But I know nobody that is answerable for his mistake, or obliged to humour his folly. Whilst a man's mind is contracted, the largeness of his income makes him appear to the greater disadvantage. If his soul is mean and illiberal, a profusion of good things about him, will, like the rays of the sun diffused round an object, set off this

this disposition in the strongest light. In an obscure station, he might, like a traveller in the dark, have passed through life unnoticed and uncensured; but his elevation exposes him the more to the view; only, alas! to make him the more conspicuously contemptible. And it seems not only an affront to *true* worth, but a kind of idolatry—a prostitution of respect to offer it to such gilded INSIGNIFICANTS; and like most other idolatry, will only be paid by FOOLS AND KNAVES.

BUT if the R——r's pecuniary accumulations will not command sufficient homage from his C.; perhaps his accademical honors will better answer his purpose; and oblige the C. through a consciousness of his inferiority, to humble himself before him. And indeed the C. is ready to confess, that he could with much more ease prevail upon himself to do so, had he such a cause. For the respect he acknowledges for the universities — those ancient and eminent seats of learning, will descend upon all the members of them in the same degree, as the distinctions they have been pleased to confer upon them, may reasonably claim. And had they

authorized this same R. to have added to his name TWO CAPITAL LETTERS as a testimonial that he came out from them, the C. would have been disposed to entertain sentiments of him, suitable to so distinguishing an honor. But alas! unfortunately for the R. he knows nothing of the universities;—nor do the universities know any thing of him. — This was not *the door through which he entered into the sheep-fold; but he climbed up some other way*; no doubt with a pious and disinterested view, *willing*, as he was *capable* to take care of the flock of Christ.

BUT notwithstanding the R. has had no academical education, and has upon that account no honors and advantages to boast of: yet as by a most *astonishing* and *unaccountable* good fortune, he is situated in a station, wherein a considerable share of literature and understanding should be, he probably thinks himself possessed of them: and that because the place he occupies is great, and the seat of wisdom, the occupant must of course be GREAT AND WISE. But if this is his way of arguing, it is a plain proof, that he is ignorant both of the rules of logic and of the ways of the world: otherwise he would not
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from such premises deduce such an unwarrantable conclusion. — The King of France from his being in possession of the throne of that kingdom, is certainly a King; but to infer therefore that he is either WISE OR GOOD, would be as ridiculous, as it might be without foundation.

EVERY man, it is true, *should be* in possession of those qualifications, which the station requires wherein he is; but it is likewise as true, that men are many times put into stations, without much attention to the qualifications requisite in them.—*If the race was always to the swift—the battle to the strong—bread to the wise—riches to men of understanding—and favour to men of skill:*—If we had reason from our own observation, or from scripture to believe, that every man was in the place which he most deserved; and unto which his parts and genius were best adapted; it would be a kind of injustice to withhold honor from those, unto whom we must acknowledge it to be due, from their being in an honourable station. And especially as there are no attainments which can more justly pretend to merit, than those in literature. For notwithstanding our faculties

culties are given us by God, the improvement of them is principally owing to ourselves; and fortune, as it is usually termed, seems to have as little share in those, as in most other acquisitions.

BUT when both revelation and experience assure us, that there is *folly* and *villany* too, *(a)* many times set in great dignity: *(b)* it naturally obliges us to make a distinction betwixt the man and his place; and to affix to each of them a separate and distinct idea; lest we give an undistinguishing honor to both, when both are not honourable; and bestow that countenance and respect upon a fool or a villain, which are only due to wise and virtuous characters.

AND so he, who shall conclude from the great preferment of a priest (*especially of one, who originally was not designed to be such, nor ever received an education for any such purpose*) that he must be proportionably learned and wise, may talk in such a strain as a vain-glorious priest may approve, and cares him for; but will not thereby evidence either his knowledge of the world, or his discernment of men.

(a) Eccles. x. 6.

(b) — iii. 16.

SINCE every body knows, that it is in most cases, not the *merit* of the clerk, that is the recommendation to preferment, but the weight and importunity of applicants in his behalf: who in order to make their application successful, may, *either by the suppression of truth, or the suggestion of falsehoods*, impose upon a well-disposed patron; and prevail upon him to bestow a presentation upon a person, who is altogether as unknown to him, as he is undeserving his favour. For solicitors in this case have very often only one point in view—to procure a provision for perhaps an almost destitute friend: — or it may be, *for a poor relation, who hangs upon them an heavy incumbrance*: and for whom, they neither know, how to obtain any secular employment; *nor indeed what employment he is fit for*: and only thrust him into the church, wherein they happen to have interest to introduce and serve him, because they are ignorant in any other way how to enable him to get his daily bread. Hereby giving too just an occasion for that general reproachful observation—*that when men want capacity for every other business, they have capacity enough for the church*; and though they have

not parts for a clerkship in an office, nor scarcely for a place in COMMON EXCISE; they are good enough to make their appearance in the pulpit, and to qualify them to be ministers of the gospel of Christ. As if that vocation, *which requires, to discharge it well,* the most INTENSE STUDY AND APPLICATION, together with the best disposition, apprehension, and judgment; which is in itself the most sublime, and of the utmost consequence to be thoroughly understood, for the sake of the teacher as well as the taught; should be undertaken by the very REFUSE of mankind—by men, whom nature seems to have designed for the very lowest occupations.

HOWEVER—when the relations of such a one have once got him admission into the church, they are willing for their own credit to raise him in it as high as their interest enables them: his qualifications for any station in it, they may little regard, whilst they keep their eyes fixed upon the advantages that will accrue from the acquisition of a lucrative benefice: of which if they can but get him securely possessed; the other matters belonging to it, he must manage how he *can*,

or

or *will*. And probably the priest proves as indifferent in these matters too, as those who recommended him; and may both want abilities and inclination to enable him to discharge his duty with reputation to himself, and satisfaction and benefit to the people.

UPON these accounts, it always appears very extraordinary to me, that patrons do not present upon their own personal knowledge. For let a patron reside wherever he will, there are clergymen enow, with whose character he either is, or soon may be, acquainted: and to make choice of such a one as in *all respects* he judged most fit, would be not only discharging his *important* trust most piously; but would be a means of keeping many clergymen from stations, for which they have neither a suitable disposition, nor abilities; as well as of raising others into them, who would fill them to the great joy of their patron—to their own credit—and to the honor of religion.

BUT what degree of understanding and erudition the R. of — may have, I pretend not to define: if one may form a judgment from the way of life, for which he was designed; and from the manner of his conducting

ducting himself previous to his entrance into orders ; it is natural to conclude that his stock of either is not *uncommonly large*. And besides a man who has talents of this kind, and especially a clergyman, would surely have ambition enough sometimes to shew them :—Nay, one would think, was he ever so disposed, it would not be in his power altogether to conceal them : his conversation in private ; but particularly his discourses in publick, would be certain proofs and manifestations of them. But when a clergyman's conversation always consists in *low-gossiping* talk ;—in little idle tales, relating to people's families, or to their dress and manner of living ; or in repeating such pieces of news, and scraps of politicks, as the common papers furnish the readers with :—And when his discourses from the pulpit are the labours of other men, which he can read with the assurance of a composer, and *without a blush* ; and does not attempt to address the congregation with any thing of his own—unless alas ! upon such particular occasions, as he cannot find any thing in his library adapted to ; which has sometimes obliged him to make a woeful discovery of his nakedness

and

and to expose his poverty of sentiment and language to the disgust of his meanest hearer.*—What pretensions can such a man have to extraordinary deference, if he has the least spark of modesty remaining? Or what person of any spirit or discernment would be willing to pay it?—Such a man's strength is to *fit still*;—to be content and thankful for any portion of respect, a deluded world may offer him; and not to endeavour to extort it from others, who without a very perspicuous eye, can descry too much of his weakness and folly, ever to think he deserves it.

AND if it be pride, not to fall down, and to refuse to do homage to such a Divine as this;—if it be pride, not to extol such parts as these;—and if it be pride to scorn to pour into the greedy ears of such a man, fustian adulation, and to swell and impose upon his vanity with undue praise, the C. pleads guilty to the indictment; and acknowledges that he always has been proud, and intends to continue so. It has been his constant practice and resolution, never to sacrifice truth to a compliment; nor to offer violence to his

* ———Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo
Ipse domi, simul ac nummos contempler in arcâ.

HOR.

sincerity

sincerity in condescension to any man's foible ;—that his heart shall never accuse his tongue of HYPOCRISY ;—nor will he prostitute conscience to bring any profit to himself, or gratification to any other man. He desires to be always civil—but never servile ;—to be honest without rudeness, and obliging without being mean : and if this is denominated pride, it is such as he shall always glory in, and hopes to retain a liking for it, to the latest moment of his life.

BUT indeed supposing the R——'s charge of insolence, impertinence, and pride against the C. was much better founded than it is ; why should the C. upon that account suffer the treatment he has met with, and be turned out of his curacy, merely for the R——'s opinion ? For my part, I cannot apprehend that it is a thing of any consequence what the R. may judge of him in these respects ; nor ought it to be a matter of attention and enquiry with any superior :—but whether he discharges the duties of his function *properly* and with *punctuality* :—not whether any part of his personal behaviour may hurt the R----r's pride and raise his disgust ;—but whether in his clerical capacity he demean himself

himself as the laws of God and of the church require. And if with regard to these articles he stands acquitted, surely he is no ways concerned or responsible, for what an overweening conceit, or an unreasonable resentment, may be apt to demand. As far as he is capable of distinguishing merit, he will most gladly render it every tribute of deference and acknowledgment it can in any wise claim: but evidence will in all cases have its weight with him, and he cannot but judge accordingly. And whoever recollects what has been observed of the R----'s behaviour from *first* to *last* towards his C. must allow, that he has evidence sufficient to convince him that there is but little merit of *any kind* there, nor consequently any reasonable claim to that deference, which to merit *alone* is due.

If it shall appear to the reader, that I have paid more attention to these charges, than their importance seems to require; I can only say in my own behalf, that as they have by the R. been laid particular stress upon, I found myself obliged to do so. He has in every corner industriously *whispered* them into the

the ears of his acquaintance, not only to bring disreputation and an odium upon the C. (having nothing but such fancied faults to alledge against him) but to ward off, as well as he can, that heavy censure he seems to be conscious he has deserved for his malicious treatment of him. It was therefore necessary to shew how ill-grounded these charges are; and what little cause he has upon these accounts to complain; if he could but acquire any share of that most useful knowledge—the *knowledge of himself*.

BUT how little reason soever there might be from the curate's behaviour, for his dismission; the R. gave him to understand *that it was judged prudent to make an example of him in this way, in order to deter other curates from taking the like liberty with their rectors.*

THIS declaration favours so strong of oriental despotism and tyranny, as cannot fail to raise every honest man's indignation:—that a set of men may effectually be frightened into a quiet acquiescence in an unreasonable imposition; and that a practice that is contrary to our laws ecclesiastical as well as divine, may without disturbance or interruption

ruption be continued; a man who has the sense to discern, and the resolution not to submit to them, must be forcibly stuck up as a scare-crow, to terrify and awe into an abject compliance his weak and dastardly brethren.

HENCE ye curates collect your fate, if ye do not patiently bear what your imperious Lords shall think proper to impose! If you dare to expostulate; this may cost you dear:—you may be denominated insolent for it, and ordered to turn out and to starve. A comfortable condition truly!—Something like that of the galley-slave, who is chained to the oar, and without murmuring or complaint must work himself to death at the pleasure of an arbitrary master. Does the education bestowed upon you qualify you only for a state of the most dependent servitude? And is the money which has been expended to procure it, laid out to purchase for you insult and contempt?—Great encouragement this—for parents to devote their children to the church, with a prospect before their eyes of placing them in so eligible a situation!

It is a condition however, my suffering brethren!

brethren ! which neither God, nor your wife and reverend ancestors intended you : and though a constant encroachment on the one side, and a passiveness and concession on the other, have made a practice *shameful* in itself too customary ; and have so familiarised it to the eyes of the vulgar, that its impropriety is less shocking and disgusting than it ought to be ; yet a custom which has neither *right* nor reason for its support, must stand upon a tottering basis ; and needs nothing more than a proper and general exertion of spirit in those who have no cause to approve it, to break through, and to destroy it. Whatever is unreasonable and illegal in itself, whilst the same reason and laws subsist which constitute it such ; time can never make otherwise. An imposition of twenty or thirty years continuance, is no less an imposition, than if it was but a fortnight old ; and no prescription which it can plead, can render it fit to be tolerated, if it is in its own nature wrong and abusive. Its being submitted to, for twenty years—or its being done by twenty people, signifies nothing : the grand question is, whether it ought to be done, or submitted to at all ? — And if reason

reason does not approve it, and the laws of God and men authorize it not; no man of common honesty and conscience can wish its continuance; nor surely any man whose mind is not weak and effeminate, longer submit to it. If rectors, &c. will not perform their own share of parochial duty, and their superiors will connive at their indolence; let an handsome recompense be made to their substitute for the doing of it! And let them answer for their omission to God as well as they can! But not think it reasonable, with so *trifling* a share of the hire as is generally allotted to a curate, to impose upon him the whole labour of the cure.

BUT, according to my judgment, it would be more consistent with the will of God, and more conducive to the advancement of religion, if the mistake of those incumbents, who consider so superficially, as to fancy they have a discretionary power whether to officiate in their cures or no, was fully rectified; and they were in an authoritative manner informed, that the revenues of the church were never designed for the maintenance and support of idleness, or extravagancy, but as an

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encouragement and recompense for the assiduous and faithful pastor.

It is true the C. here spoken of, has suffered as far as the power and malice of the R. with whom he was connected, could extend, for endeavouring to convince him of his mistake : but his sufferings can neither deprive him of his innocency, nor are any proof of his guilt : and he very well knows, THAT HE IS NOT THE FIRST THAT HAS SUFFERED FOR AN OPPOSITION TO ILLEGAL AND UNREASONABLE MEASURES. — Arbitrary power conscious of the weakness of its rational supports, is generally imperious and precipitate ; being hasty to subdue by violence and rage all its opponents, because unable to satisfy and silence them by any other means. But power which is founded upon reason and law, *and within the bounds of reason and law exerted*, has no such tyrannical recourse ; but as it forms its proceedings upon the rules of strict justice, so is it ready to submit them to a fair enquiry ; thinking it no less necessary to convince the judgment of the offender, than to punish him for his offence.

BUT

BUT whatever pain the C. may have undergone for the punishment he has sustained, or rather in consideration of the manner in which it was inflicted, he never for the cause of it suffered a moment; having done nothing repugnant to his calmest persuasion; nor any thing that his conscience at this hour does not approve. Let those who have WREAKED THEIR REVENGE UPON HIM, see to it! For he is fully satisfied, that he is much more happy under his present usage, than it is possible for any acts of oppressive power to make any man. And he can with an humble confidence commit his cause to him that judgeth righteously, who will summon the oppressor and oppressed before his tribunal, and without respect of persons, or partiality in the administration of justice, render to every man according to his works. Then shall the righteous man, whoever he is, stand in great boldness, before the face of such as have afflicted him, and MADE NO ACCOUNT OF HIS LABOURS. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they repenting and

groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves; This was he whom we had sometime in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honor. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints! What hath PRIDE profited us? or what good hath RICHES with our vaunting brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and as a post that hasteth by. (a)

IF to be sick indeed and unable to go out of his house—if to consider the scripture, the rubrick, and canons of the church, as the rule of every ecclesiastick—if from the injunctions in holy writ, and by comparing the 45th with the 56th canon, the C. cannot but conclude it the duty of every beneficed and resident preacher, to preach *at least* one sermon every Sunday;—if to expostulate with a RICH RECTOR upon his denying all obligation of this nature, and upon his declaring, *that notwithstanding the curate's indisposition* it was his business to take care that the whole Sunday's duty was discharged:—If these things are to be looked upon as criminal; the C.

(a) Wisdom, v. 1, &c.

confesses

confesses his guilt; as he finds no disquietude from a consciousness of it, nor from any apprehensions of a future inquest concerning it. In the time of his health, he never declined any part of parochial duty, nor disputed at all about it; but took either *the whole, or what share* of duty the R. pleased, whether upon sundays or particular days, *without any hesitation* or the least sign of dissatisfaction: and what redounds greatly to the HUMANITY AND LIBERALITY OF THE R. without the least compliment from him of *any kind* whatever.

THE C. hopes, he shall not be accused of any improper or ostentatious views, whilst he attempts, *by doing justice only to his behaviour*, to wipe off any stain that may casually have fallen upon his reputation, merely from the consideration of the treatment he has met with: for from *that alone* many may be apt to conclude, that in his clerical capacity he must have been very culpable, otherwise surely common good-nature and justice, would not have permitted him to be so opprobriously used.——Upon which account in this place he begs leave to defy the most envenom-

envenomed enemy he has, upon a retrospect of near twenty years, with justice to accuse him of any participation in diversions unbecoming his vocation — of any irregularity in his moral conduct—or of any neglect of duty belonging to him as a parish-priest, even in the minutest instances : “ His friend and his garden have been his chief diversions, as his study and the parish have been his chief employment.” And notwithstanding his demeanor has been constantly regulated according to this plan, he has suffered a treatment which only the most remiss and immoral of his cloth could deserve :—And *this*, he seriously declares in the presence of God Almighty, without any offence or fault — unless the dispute occasioned by his sickness, concerning the R——r’s obligation to preach one sermon upon a Sunday, can be denounced such.

WHAT share of blame the R. and his mighty coadjutor may have incurred in this business, is submitted to the *discernment* and decision of an impartial world : that those who have any notions becoming a gentleman, and a professor of the religion of
Christ

Christ Jesus, may, in *the uprightness of their conscience*, determine, whether the usage the C. has met with (especially considering by whom he was appointed to his cure, and his many years faithful service) is fit for a gentleman or a christian, either to shew, or to receive. As he doubts not an acquittal from those honest minds, on whose judgments in matters of right and wrong, riches and power have no influence;—so he fears it not from God:—to whom he makes his final appeal.

AND as the best advice, he can impart, earnestly recommends to those, who have not only treated him ill, but basely endeavoured to palliate that ill treatment by most false, though in themselves very trifling and idle insinuations;—the serious consideration of that awful—that all-disclosing day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest; and every action and *its motive* appear without disguise: when riches and power can no longer fortify the cruel hand of the oppressor; but the friendless and those that have had none to help them, shall find redress and protection in Omnipotent Goodness; who will plead their cause, and revenge their wrongs;

wrongs; and proportion their future glory to the degree of their integrity, and of their present suffering.

A REFLEXION that will surely yield unspeakable consolation to the mind of man, and wonderfully support it under the strongest efforts of oppression and injustice, and under *any* adverse circumstances that may here befall him; and will enable him *to go through this vale of misery, and to use it for a well; proceeding from strength to strength; until, O thou God of Gods! he participates the fruition of thy beatitudes, in a happy communion with those blessed spirits; from whom, pride, and malice—and envy, and every uneasy passion are for ever banished; and amongst whom the highest felicity—the most consummate harmony and love, uninterruptedly and eternally dwell.*

O PRÆCLARUM diem, cum ad illud divinum animorum concilium cœtumque proficiscar, cumque ex hac turba et colluvione discedam!

Cic. de sen.



T W E L V E
S E R M O N S

PREACHED ON
SEVERAL OCCASIONS,

By J. C. KNOWLES, A. B.

And Minister of POINTON and NORBURY in CHESHIRE.

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1769.

prepares them ; especially if but heightened with a few *inflammatory and high-flavoured ingredients* ; will be frequently preferred to *wholesome and substantial food*, such as is fitted and designed by God himself for the pleasure and support of his rational creatures : notwithstanding the former shall bring on many painful disorders, and probably an immature death ; and the latter shall be the means not only of preserving health and life, but, in lasting bloom and vigour.

It is a pity that the *corporeal* tastes of men should be so far depraved, as we too often find them : but their *intellectual* depravity is greatly to be lamented : — that they can be fond to spend their leisure-hours in the perusal of plays — of novels, and romances ; which generally yield nothing more than a transient amusement to the mind, or produce a pleasing emotion of the passions — rather than in books which are calculated for the improvement of their morals, and to excite their desires and endeavours after the attainment of that felicity, which is without measure, as it is without end.

WERE

WERE men's judgments properly rectified, and did they clearly view things with the eye of reason ; they would act in matters of this nature, like prudent managers in secular affairs ;—what was merely pleasing would give place to that which is profitable too ; and the invitations to *entertainment* would *only* be complied with, when the demands of *interest* had been sufficiently obeyed.

TILLOTSON and Sherlock, &c. would then be *at least* as frequently conned as Shakespeare or Richardson, &c. nor would the former become a prey to dust and worms, any more than the latter are permitted to be so.

To expect men to have always in their hands a sermon — or a prayer-book, would be very unreasonable and very ridiculous : but for men, who are compounded of body and soul, which according to their present behaviour are eternally to exist in bliss or wo — seldom, or never to have either ; has certainly a very unpromising appearance ; and seems to betray too much indifferency for what should be their *first*, as it is indeed their most momentous concernment.

IT

IT may perhaps be said, that there are other books besides sermons, that will instruct them as well in their duty, and teach them as perfectly the way to happiness.

BUT supposing this to be true—yet at the same time I must believe, that whoever has a sincere desire to be so instructed, and to learn his way to happiness—as the design of sermons is generally for that purpose, cannot consistently with his own principles have any objection to the perusal of them.

ESPECIALLY if it be allowed, that there is *as much* and *as sound* theology to be found in our English-sermons, as in any other species of composition.

INSOMUCH that Mr. Stackhouse in his introduction to his body of divinity observes, that a very learned and judicious author (Bacon of advancement of learning) suggested this thought, which principally induced him to engage in that excellent work:—namely, that, “if the choice and best observations which have been made dispersedly in our English-sermons, were set down in a continuance, it would be the best work in divinity

P R E F A C E.

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divinity that has been wrote since the time of the apostles."

I AM however very far from being so weak, to think that the following sermons deserve to be ranked in the number of those which gave occasion to this observation. And whatever the ill-natured part of mankind may conjecture from my making them public—vanity, I can honestly assure them, did not instigate me: and were there not other motives, which I must leave to their sagacity to find out, I should have confined my labours within the circle of my own cure, and have left the business of publication to ABLER HEADS.

SEVERAL of the sermons at the time they were preached, I was desired by some of my friends to publish: but these requests I always declined, as imagining them to proceed more from *their partiality* to me, than from any discernment of merit in the discourses themselves. But the circumstances of things being changed, have produced a change of mind in me, and have disposed me to send them out into the world with an *humble hope* that

that they may somewhere or other be productive of some good in it : and if they shall but prove in any sort instrumental in preventing the misery, or promoting the blessedness of a SINGLE SOUL ; I shall esteem it a *singular* felicity and an ample compensation for the labours of my whole life : and if they are read with the same spirit and design with which they were wrote,—this is a hope, which as I cannot but be willing to indulge, so I am certain, I shall not indulge in vain.

SERMON I.

FROM A SHORT SURVEY OF
OUR SAVIOUR'S LIFE AND
DOCTRINES,
THE UNREASONABLENESS AND
DANGER INFERED OF A
DISBELIEF AND REJECTION OF THEM.

®

MEMORIAL

TO THE MEMORY OF
THE BATTALION
AND



THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA
AND
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

S E R M O N I.

MATTHEW xii. 33.

EITHER MAKE THE TREE GOOD, AND ITS FRUIT GOOD, OR ELSE MAKE THE TREE CORRUPT AND ITS FRUIT CORRUPT : FOR THE TREE IS KNOWN BY ITS FRUIT.

OUR blessed Saviour having in the face of the multitude cured a demoniack who was both blind and dumb; the people, (it is said) *were amazed* at the power by which he acted; and at such a wonderful exertion of it, were honest enough to infer his Divine Mission, and disposed to acknowledge, and receive him for their Messiah : But the pharisees, whose malice was without bounds, as it

was without cause, were resolved not only to be proof against all conviction themselves, but to endeavour to prevent the conviction of others; and therefore as they had no pretence to support them in the denial of the miracle, the best expedient, in their opinion, was to mis-impute it. If the spectators might have been induced, from such a demonstration of super-natural power residing in Jesus, to embrace his doctrine, and to become his disciples; the pharisees knew how, by an odious imputation, so to disparage it, as instead of veneration, to raise in their hearts indignation and abhorrence: His power was very extraordinary they were obliged to confess; but then they declared it to be not divine, but diabolical; and that therefore *though he cast out devils*, it was only by the authority and co-assistance of Beelzebub their prince. But how effectually does our Lord refute this invidious charge, by remarking the impossibility of supposing the devil to lend his power, and to be in confederacy with another in order to enable him to oppose

S E R M O N I. 5

oppose and defeat his own views and designs. As the kingdom which he came to establish amongst men was entirely destructive to that of Satan, it is plain beyond all contradiction, that he must act by a power repugnant, and superior to his; which evidently appears from this familiar elucidation, *that no man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then indeed he may spoil his house.* With great propriety therefore does our Lord appeal to his personal conduct and doctrines, as an undeniable proof that both he and they were derived from heaven. *Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit.* If what he did, and taught was holy and virtuous; he himself, in all equitable construction, must be judged to be so: since in this respect, in moral and natural subjects the case is the same, the quality of both may surely be determined from their several productions. *Every good man, as well as*

6 S E R M O N I.

every good tree, will bring forth good fruit; but a corrupt mind and a corrupt tree will bring forth evil fruit. (a) Wherefore as our Saviour, upon another occasion concludes, by their fruits ye shall know them.

I SHALL therefore beg leave in the first place, to take a short survey of our Saviour's life and doctrine. And secondly to make to you, an observation or two from it.

AND first then as to his life, one of his own apostles has given us this epitomy of it, that *he went about doing good; (b) a truth which the perusal of his history will abundantly confirm; since there we not only find his conduct was pure and irreproachable, but that it was his constant employment to dispense blessings to mankind, to display his omnipotent goodness for their comfort and relief. The blind received their sight, and the lame walked; the lepers were cleansed, and the deaf heard; the dead were raised up, and the poor had his gospel preached to them: (c) insomuch that*

(a) Mat. vii. 17 and 20. (b) Acts x. 38. (c) Mat. xi. 5.
almost

almost every page is pregnant with instances of his tender commiseration and regard for the afflicted; how readily he inclined his ears to their cries, and imparted to them his almighty help. If humility and meekness are amiable virtues, these he exemplified in a most amazing degree, cheerfully condescending to the meanest offices, and patiently enduring the worst of abuses and indignities. So universal was his charity, that it extended even to his bitterest enemies, returning their implacable malice with expressions of kindness and love, and praying for his rude and barbarous murderers, in the midst of their cruelty and insult. *Whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report,* whatever, in short, became that high character in which he appeared were all comprised in his own behaviour. And what we find he was in himself, he solicitously endeavoured to make all his followers; adding such useful precepts to that most perfect pattern which he has set them, as if duly observed would both render our pre-

sent state a much more comfortable abode; and entitle us to the unspeakable joys of an endless life. An indulgence of any of those passions, such as pride, envy, and revenge, which now so much disturb and disquiet mankind, is utterly repugnant to his will and laws; and lowliness of mind, mutual forbearance and affection, the grand principles of social happiness, are constituted the distinguishing marks of his disciples. Oppression, injustice and fraud, the great occasions of variances and complaints, would entirely be banished from human society, did every individual according to his direction honestly appeal to the decision of his own breast, for the regulation of his dealings towards others; and offer no treatment to any which his own heart should inform him, he would be unwilling to receive. All those gratifications which might prove injurious to the peace of our neighbour, or indeed to our own health, our reputation or estate, are prohibited and denied us; but whatever pleasures may be enjoyed
with

S E R M O N 7. 9

with safety and innocence, and are not below the dignity of a rational existence, he has no where disallowed, but left free to all.

If providence has made a difference in her largesses, and has been more liberal to some, than she has to others; the abundance of those, according to his appointment, should be a supply for the wants of these : (a) Every man according to his respective ability should distribute to those that need; *that he that hath gathered much may have nothing over, and he that hath gathered little may have no lack.* Like an affectionate father to all his creatures, there is no condition incident to any of them, which his goodness has not providently considered, and made the best provision that can be for their ease and felicity in it; insomuch that did mankind universally and invariably adhere to his precepts, there would be much more good, and much less evil in the world, than at present we experience; and instead of being plagues and torments, it would be our daily prac-

(a) 2 Cor. viii. 14.

tice as it is our indispensable duty, to administer help and comfort one to another.

BUT our blessed Saviour's concern for our welfare terminates not in this present life, but extends itself into another : And as he has opened to our view a most glorious prospect beyond the grave, so hath he taught us to fix our hopes and expectations there : which is not only the greatest encouragement which could be proposed to secure our obedience to his laws, but the best consolation and support, which in the day of adversity the afflicted can receive. He has communicated to us a knowledge much superior to any we could have arrived at whether from nature, or any antecedent revelation, both of the terms we stand in with our Maker ; and of the means how to render ourselves and our services most acceptable to him. He has given us the strongest assurances, that we are composed of an immaterial, as well as a material substance ; that the one is proof against the power of death ; and that the other, though subject to mortality, shall at a certain

S E R M O N I. II

tain period of time, be recalled to life, and live thence forward for ever.

THAT therefore there is nothing in this present state, that can deserve much of our attention and regard, since it is only a short passage to a boundless eternity; a momentary probation for an unalterable condition: That there is an awful bar of Divine Justice at which we must all be arraigned; *high and low, rich and poor, one with another*; to give an account of, and to receive according to, that we have done in the body, whether it be good, or whether it be bad.

If upon examination, it shall appear that we have behaved well, that is, honestly endeavoured after a conformity to his example and commands; he has promised, that the fruition of God and Heaven, of inconceivable bliss and glory, shall be our portion and recompence for ever: But if we have behaved ill, that is, lived in a contempt of his authority, and in the violation of his laws; a dreadful and irrevocable sentence shall then pass upon us,
which

which shall doom us to never ceasing torments both of mind and body; *to the worm that never shall die, and to the fire that never shall be quenched; where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.* (a)

SUCH was the life, and such are the doctrines of the holy Jesus; both manifestly calculated for the happiness and improvement of human nature, to raise it to the highest pitch of perfection and felicity that it is capable of in its present state, and to prepare it, for a much more exalted degree of both in a succeeding one. Pity it is, that a regard to our true welfare, cannot prevail with us to copy after this divine exemplar, and to conform to his excellent precepts! For was this our care and study, the world would be quite a different scene from what we find it; and both as single individuals, and members of society we should reap the blessed effects of such a change of conduct. For it cannot be denied, that many of the evils under which we labour, are the

(a) Mark ix. 44, &c.

natural

natural consequences of our deviations from these rules; not only those which affect our bodies or estates, (and which we too commonly owe to the violations of the laws of sobriety and temperance) but those unhappy differences which destroy the peace and harmony of families and neighbourhoods; and which flow from the indulgence of such ugly passions, as our religion and the author of it, tell us, it is our duty to restrain and conquer.

How numerous are the evils ordinarily occasioned by pride, revenge, and covetousness, of which by our complaints we seem to be sensible, though it is in our own power to remedy or prevent them, by a strict adherence to the Gospel dictates? For it is there that we are all enjoined to be clothed with humility: (a) and *not to think of ourselves more highly* (nor of others more contemptibly) *than we ought to think:* (b) That whatever superior advantages we may be blessed with, they may be matter of gratitude to the donor, but none for boasting; (c) since as there is nothing

(a) 1 Pet. v. 5. (b) Rom. xii. 13. (c) 1 Cor. iv. 7.
which

which we have not received, so is there no room to glory as if we had not received it.

It is there that forgiveness of injuries is pressed upon us from considerations the most important that can be, as the terms and condition of our own forgiveness with God : and so far are we from having a liberty to pursue with a malice not to be appeased, an indiscreet word or action, that we are commanded to love even our enemies, (a) to return their malevolence with acts of good-will, and to endeavour to subdue their worst dispositions with all the expressions of beneficence and affection.

If the worldling would seriously consult these sacred pages, he might be convinced that his fond attachment to Mammon is utterly inconsistent with a due regard for his Maker : and that instead of oppressing and defrauding his poor brother, and taking the advantage either of his ignorance or necessities to enhance his own fortunes, he is indispensably obliged to assist with his advice, with his purse, with his power, whoever shall stand in need of any or all of

(a) Mat. v. 44.

them. Such excellent provision has the merciful Redeemer of mankind made for our present felicity, that there wants nothing but a hearty compliance with the evangelical directions, to introduce a happiness, like that which was feigned of the golden age: to make earth in some sort resemble heaven; and man to bear a much nearer similitude to the glorious inhabitants of that blessed place.

AND those evils which our utmost piety and virtue cannot secure us from; which are either natural to our state, or providential appointments, the gospel has furnished us with such powerful remedies and supports under them, as must greatly alleviate their pressure, or enable us with fortitude and resignation to bear them. It so strongly assures us of the infinite goodness of the supreme governour of the world, that we cannot but be certain of some gracious purpose in every dispensation: and the reward it proposes for our future recompence must be sufficient to buoy up our spirits under his severest infliction, and
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make us *rather rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, (a)* in hopes of shortly attaining to a more abundant fruition of it.

How rugged soever the path of life may be, so ample a remuneration in view must greatly animate us in our progress: and the difficulties and impediments we meet with on the road, will appear trifling and inconsiderable, whilst we look forward to the end of our journey, and contemplate the immense reward of our pains and patience. This is the greatest encouragement we can receive, to make us proceed with resolution and steadiness; till our faith, from which now our consolation flows, is realized in vision, and our highest expectations exceeded in the joys and beatitudes of eternal glory.

STRANGE it is, that the Jews could not be prevailed upon to embrace a religion in itself so amiable, and promising such great blessings, both here and hereafter; especially when it came recommended with all the testimonials of divine approbation,

(a) 1 Peter i. 8.

S E R M O N I. 17

and God set so undeniably the seal of his omnipotency to confirm the verity of it. But much more strange is it, that those, who have no prejudices of education to conquer, who have been brought up under its influences, in a country where it is publicly professed and revered, should yet endeavour to overturn the belief of it, by weakening its evidences, and depreciating its author, not only to expose themselves to the most fearful destruction, but by their sophistry and suggestions to seduce the weak, and encourage the wicked in their impiety, and to their ruin.

BUT this leads me to the second thing I proposed: —to make some observations upon this survey of our Saviour's life and doctrine.

Now if such is the conversation and doctrines of the holy Jesus; (as for the truth of the representation I appeal to all who know them.) In the first place, I observe, how unreasonable it is, to cavil and raise objections against either, when it is the manifest

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nifest design of both, to procure our happiness here, and to prepare us for, and lead us to an happiness for ever. There is nothing in the gospel, whether we suppose it to be true, or not, but what every man who properly consults his own interest would wish to be so: the duties contained in it are so consistent with our rational natures; so mainly conducive to the peace of single individuals in particular, and to the order and well being of the community in general; that every man that would pass his days in rest and quietness, will find himself obliged to use his best endeavours to promote the belief and practise of them.

AND whoever may be resolved to be under no restraint from them, but to follow without controul the dictates of his vitiated appetites and passions; if other men should think and act as he does (and every other man has the same right with any one man) and an universal licentiousness should ensue; so dreadful must be the consequence to all, that woeful experience

perience would soon convince him of his error, and give him sufficient cause to condemn and deplore the liberty he had taken. Did Christianity, as in its infancy, expose its professors to reproach and persecution: did they suffer in their health, their reputation, or estate, by adhering to its commands; this might furnish us with some plea in behalf of those, who would gladly banish it out of the world: But when the reverse of all this is undeniably true; when it is evidently calculated for the attainment and preservation of every thing which is really valuable; it leads us to conclude, that it must be the depravity of their principles, and the immorality of their lives, which can set men upon a conduct, otherwise so strange and unaccountable. For if they are strongly inclined to vice, and determined too to gratify their vitious inclinations, no wonder if they entertain an unfavourable opinion of a religion, which would lay them under obligations to suppress and conquer them. Whatever is an enemy to their pleasures

tures, and must prove a check and impediment to their pursuits, they will naturally wish to remove out of the way ; and when once men come to wish their religion false, the next step is to endeavour to argue themselves into a persuasion that it is so.

AND the same reason (bad as it is) may be assigned for their taking so much pains to invalidate the evidences of the soul's immateriality, and of its future and eternal existence. For there is something so melancholy and shocking to the human mind in the apprehensions of annihilation, or an insensible state ; that where is the man, was it submitted to his option, whether to be, or to cease to be, if he is not quite destitute of all hope of the divine favour, that would not joyfully embrace the former ; that would not choose to have his powers of thinking and acting continued and enlarged, rather than to be deprived of them, or to have them extinguished for ever ? Non-entity indeed is preferable to a miserable existence ; and more eligible is it

it to have no senses, than those which only can serve as inlets to torment. Consistently therefore do those wretches behave, in *founding their best hopes*, in an utter extinction of their being, when from the gospel conditions, they can collect no title, or assurance, unless to the dreadful punishments therein denounced. But how mean and abject must be that soul, which for the sake of some beastly gratifications, can willingly forfeit its birth-right in heaven, and relinquish the highest and most ravishing joys, which a good man must always feel, from the sure expectations of a blissful eternity.

BUT secondly, I observe, that the consequence of a disbelief and rejection of our Saviour's doctrines in all likelihood will prove so terrible, that it must be the highest pitch of madness to rely and venture our all upon it. Before a man should dare to give himself to the ways of sin, he ought to have an absolute certainty, that he is at no time to be accountable for it; otherwise he runs such fearful hazards, as

every prudent man would be careful to avoid : For were the arguments produced, equally strong in support of the negative, as the affirmative side of the question ; nay ! could we suppose some degree of probability in favour of his infidelity ; this would be far too little, in a case of such infinite importance and of so tender a nature as the loss of a soul. If it is not as clear as demonstration can make it ; if upon the whole there remains the least reason for diffidence or doubt, no wise man would pursue any course, however pleasing, which for all he can determine, may shortly terminate in endless misery. But when the gospel verities are so credibly attested, that no unprejudiced mind can withhold its assent from them ; when the duties set forth are agreeable to our reasonable natures ; and the futurity ascertained therein, such as our own minds fore-bode, and the general sentiments of mankind agree in ; there seems no room for incredulity here ; and nothing but extreme perverseness and blindness of heart, could prevail with any man,

man, to wish or to think them false, and to expose his soul to never-ceasing torments, without so much as a well-grounded conjecture, to countenance his error and practice.

THAT they who renounce all belief and obedience to the gospel, run *some* risques, the most sanguine of their tribe must be obliged to allow: Nay! unless they could prove their opinion to be indubitably true, which in this case they will not pretend to assert; their danger must become apparent, in proportion to the degrees of darkness and uncertainty, with which to elude it, their arguments are clouded. And why should they be so imprudent to expose themselves to danger to overturn a truth, which, only supposing them to live like rational creatures, (and such they would be supposed to live) may everlastingly advantage, but cannot possibly injure them.

If the present scene of action is all that is allotted us; if death which dissolves our frame, puts a period to our being for ever:

if that which is so wonderful in its operations, which thinks and reflects, which judges, accuses and acquits, is of the same common mass with the brute creation; we have yet the satisfaction in the mean time to think that we behave like men; that we are serviceable in our generation, and have nothing to fear beyond the grave. If there is no future life and blessedness prepared for us, but all the evangelical promises prove nothing but pompous parade; we are however sure of this, that there is no misery awaits us: and we have so acted our part, that we may march off the stage with triumph and applause; men when we are gone will revere our memories, and mention our names with respect. The* bitterest enemies to the christian religion can threaten its friends with nothing worse than this; and though it

(a) Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, lubenter erro: nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo: sin mortuus, ut quidam minuti philosophi censent, nihil sentiam, non vereor ne hunc errorem mortui philosophi irrideant.

must

must be confessed to be shocking to a mind, that indulges the *pleasing hopes, and fond desires* of immortality and glory; yet how infinitely short of that inconceivable wretchedness, which (supposing christianity to be true) its vilifiers and defisers inevitably incur. When the soul, instead of dying with the body (as their fears would incline them to wish) shall survive the mortality of its companion, and wing its reluctant flight, into the boundless regions of eternity: when death instead of cancelling the remembrance of their evil doings, and burying all in an eternal oblivion; shall introduce them before the awful tribunal of their incensed and almighty Judge; who (as the apostle expresses it) shall *execute judgment upon all, and convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* (a)

(a) Jude. xv.

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WHETHER, upon this fair comparison does the condition of the infidel or the believer appear more eligible? Whether does it seem more prudent to refuse to comply with what christianity prescribes, because it is possible there may be no hereafter state; or heartily to conform to its excellent prescripts, because 'tis more than probable there will be one? Dreadful is the hazard we run in the former case; but in the latter, we run none at all: for if we are pious and virtuous we are sure either not to be,—or to be eternally blessed: but if we are unholy and vitious, we have every thing but experience to convince us, that we shall not only live for ever, but live too in the most insupportable tortures of remorse and pain: and whether it is reconcileable with common prudence to make such a choice as may subject them to so dreadful a catastrophe, I shall submit to their own cool reason to determine.

BUT lastly I observe, that however men of this character may endeavour to deceive themselves,

themselves, first in their pursuits, and secondly in their resource, we who seem to entertain no doubts nor disparaging notions, either of the divinity or the doctrines of the author of our religion, must make it our especial care strictly to imitate his example, and to live up to his precepts: He who was infinitely good in himself, and has taken infinite pains to induce us as near as may be to a resemblance of him; may reasonably expect us to *bring forth abundantly the fruit of good works*, as he has plentifully afforded us the means of doing so: how zealously soever we may be advocates in his cause, this is the only sign of our being his true disciples; for that the tree is known by its productions, is applicable to the servants no less than the Lord. If our actions are corrupt, there needs no other proof that the principles are the same from which they flow; and if these are sound and clean, according to the purity which our religion prescribes, it will be easy, it will be natural to shew such a *conversation as becometh the gospel of Christ*.

Christ. (a) Let us then as our blessed Lord did for the conviction of the incredulous pharisees, so for our own conviction and security, appeal to our works as the surest testimony of the sincerity of our faith and love : and whether we will be prevailed upon to make this appeal or no, other men in passing a judgment upon us will take that liberty ; and God himself at the last great day will determine by them our everlasting doom. It will then be an insignificant plea that we have *called him Lord*, if we have neglected to perform what he has commanded ; to have acknowledged his life and doctrines to be pure and holy, if our immoralities have been a contradiction to our belief, and a reproach to our profession. The more perfect was he, to the greater disadvantage must we appear ; who with the assistance of such a guide and such rules to conduct us, could wilfully deviate into all the paths of error and vice.

(a) Phi. i. 27.

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LET us then, as we value his present and eternal favour, make it our first and principal care, *to be holy as he was in all manner of conversation*: since to tread in those steps in which he has gone before, is the only means to arrive at that place of beatitude and glory, where he now for ever dwells; not only receiving the infinite recompence in his human nature, to which his meritorious services stand entitled, but preparing mansions of blessedness for our reception, if with a sincere, though imperfect obedience, we shall desire and endeavour to be like him now, and to all eternity.

WHICH that we may, God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

Let us then, as we value his precious
and eternal favour, make it our first and
principal care, to be ready at all times
to meet him: for he has gone before,
in the only manner to arrive at that place of
beatitude and glory, where he now for
ever dwells; not only receiving the infinite
recompence in his human nature, to which
his meritorious service had entitled, but
preparing mankind of blessed souls for our
reception, if with a sincere, though im-
perfect obedience, we shall desire and con-
tinually endeavour to be like him now, and to all
eternity.

Which that we may, God of his in-
finite grace, assist and preserve us, O Lord,
grant, that we may be able to follow him
in all his commandments, and to be like him
in all his virtues, and to be like him in all his
glories, and to be like him in all his eternities.

SERMON II.
DISSUASIVES
FROM AN
IMPROPER BEHAVIOUR
IN
RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLIES.

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SERMON H.
DISCUSSIVE
FROM AN
INTRODUCTORY
IN
RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS

S E R M O N II.

GENESIS xxviii. 17.

AND HE WAS AFRAID, AND SAID, HOW
DREADFUL IS THIS PLACE ! THIS IS
NONE OTHER BUT THE HOUSE OF GOD,
AND THIS IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN.

THESE are the words of the patriarch
Jacob, occasioned by a vision with
which he was favoured in his journey to
Padan-aram : for being benighted and
obliged to take up his rest in the open air,
with the heaven for his covering, and the
stones of the place for his pillow, in this
situation (as the preceding verses inform us)
*he dreamed ; and behold a ladder set upon the
earth, and the top of it reached to heaven ;
and behold the angels of the Lord ascending
and descending on it : And behold the Lord*

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stood

stood above it, and assured him that he was his constant guide and protector, with many other great and gracious promises. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not; And he was afraid, and said, how dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

VERY expressive are these words of the impression made upon his mind; and of that profound veneration excited in it! For though the Almighty appeared to him not to reprove or chastise him; but to support and comfort him, with promises of the most affectionate and interesting nature; yet a sense of the more immediate presence of his Maker, could not but raise in his soul an holy awe, and throw him into raptures of astonishment and adoration.

AND what were the sentiments of Jacob upon this occasion, either are, or should be entertained by every christian at his entrance into this place, the sanctuary of God:

God: For though with his carnal eye he sees not *the heaven opened and the Son of man sitting at the right hand of his Father, (a)* yet with the eye of his faith he may perceive him in a more especial manner present, where *two or three are gathered together in his name: (b)* And therefore in a firm persuasion of the residence of the Divinity amongst us, just reason has every one to exclaim with the patriarch, *how dreadful is this place! This is literally the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*

WELL would it be, did considerations of this nature, compose the minds, and influence the behaviour of all, who seem to think it their duty to give their attendance here! but the contrary with some is too notorious to pass unobserved; who rather (one would be apt to suppose) make it a place of resort to hear, or to tell some new thing, spending a considerable portion of that time which ought to be devoted to the most sacred purposes, in idle and unpro-

(a) Act. vii. 56.

(b) Mat. xviii. 20.

fitable conversation; not only betraying the mean opinion they themselves entertain of religious offices, but giving great disgust and disturbance to their better disposed neighbours, who come with no other design but to worship and serve their Maker in a reasonable and acceptable manner.

GIVE me leave therefore at this time, particularly to request the attention of such, whilst I offer an argument or two to their consideration, in order to prevail with them, if it may be, to desist from so offensive a practise.

AND first then I would have it be considered that it is a practise contrary to all the rules of decency and good manners; which in all publick assemblies require us to endeavour to promote the design of our coming together; or at least to resolve not to interrupt and frustrate it by an improper and impertinent behaviour: accordingly in *any* appointed for *diversion*, we should scruple not to condemn those people, as rude and unpolished, who should act otherwise; and

and surely then with equal reason at *least* in those appointed for *devotion*. Unless we imagine that the church is the only place where these rules may be dispensed with; and that however punctiliously we may be obliged to observe them elsewhere, herein without any imputation upon our good-breeding, we are at liberty to do as we please. But I would ask whether there be any assembly which we conceive to be more solemn and necessary than this, or designed for the attainment of such valuable and important ends? And if not (as I take it for granted that our answer must be negative) why should we not behave with the same consistency of character in this place, as we should be ashamed not to preserve in every other? Possibly the behaviour of some may be in every place the same; and that if there is any difference, it is not in them, but in the place where they are: but then it ought to be remembered, that what may be allowable, and perhaps commendable in an *house of diversion*, is very unbecoming in the *house of God*: the same levity of mind and mean is not fit for both: and

as it is our study and delight to carry on and accommodate ourselves to the humour of the former ; so ought it to be our care, *as it is our bounden duty*, strictly to conform to, and endeavour to promote the design of the latter. We should therefore be grave and composed at least, if not disposed to be sincerely devout ; that whatever may be the motive for our own attendance, we may not deprive others of that comfort and benefit they may reasonably hope to receive, from a pious discharge of the duties of their religion. And let it be remembered, that a giddy and fantastick behaviour which in every time and place is not only disagreeable, but generally looked upon as an *indication of a weak understanding* ; so as of all others, it is the most unreasonable and unsufferable in *this place*, it is sure to give the greatest offence to all wise and considerate people, who will censure it as an argument not only of the want of a sense of religion, but of the knowledge of *that decorum* which ought *especially* to be observed in all religious assemblies :

semblies: and unto which, those who would be esteemed patterns of politeness and good breeding, if not from a consideration of a higher nature, should think themselves obliged to conform.

BUT secondly, I would have it considered, that it is a practise which may have a very bad effect upon the minds of others: as it may help to confirm some in the mean opinion they may already entertain of all Public Worship, and to lessen that regard which others might be willing to pay, who conceive different notions of its necessity and importance.

AT least, this is certain, that a decent and devout demeanour, would be the best method we could take to convince them of our opinion, and as far as our example might influence, induce them to act in conformity to it. Parents *especially* should be prevailed upon by this consideration; as their behaviour may prove to their children a direction in this as well as in most other cases. For children will most pro-

bably *be*, what they see their parents *are*; and will form their own behaviour, agreeably to the pattern which they have given them. If therefore they observe them to be humble and fervent in their supplications and prayers to the Almighty—silent and attentive in hearing his word—and hearty in setting forth his praises; that is, *seriously* and *devoutly* engaged as the several duties shall call upon them, they will be taught more by *this* to reverence the Lord and his sanctuary, to think highly of religion, and to join in religious offices, than by all the verbal persuasives and instructions we can possibly impart. But if on the other hand they perceive their parents to be indolent and unaffected—spending their time in idle conversation and remarks—paying no regard to the service—nor expressing any awe or veneration for the sacredness of the place: what opinion can we reasonably expect they should entertain of the business of devotion? or by what motives be induced to give their attendance here? In all likelihood they will imitate the
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the example they have seen, and think, and act, as lightly as those who set it. Or should it from any circumstance of nature, education, or divine grace, happen to be otherwise; that is, should they become sensible of the impropriety of such conduct, and manifest their disapprobation of it by the reverse in themselves; with what shame and confusion must a parent upon reflexion be filled, when he is called upon to learn his duty, where he ought to have taught it, and to follow his child in piety, whom he ought to have led the way!

BUT thirdly, let it be considered, that it is a practise which defeats the very end and design of religious assemblies, and makes our coming together impertinent and vain. Church assemblies, no doubt, were principally intended, to keep alive and impress upon our minds, an awful sense of the existence and providence of God; by giving us an opportunity of rendering in a publick manner, our hearty
“acknow-

“acknowledgments for the great benefits
“that we have received at his hands, of
“setting forth his most worthy praise, of
“hearing his most holy word, and of
“asking those things which are requisite
“and necessary, as well for the body as
“the soul.”

BUT with such a disposition as the people I am speaking to, seem to indulge, how can all, or any of these duties be performed, with that reverence and fervour which they ought? when they seem to be either wholly engaged, or at least their attention to be frequently broken off, by subjects of a quite different nature.

IF the adorable perfections of the Deity cannot prevail with us “to laud and magnify his glorious name;”—If the importance of Divine Revelation is unable to excite and command our observance; certainly the mercies daily vouchsafed us, are sufficient to deserve the warmest expressions of our gratitude; as well as those we continually stand in need of, to raise in our breasts an earnest solicitude to obtain

tain them : and strange it is, that we should be so forgetful, not only of the manifold obligations we lie under to God, but indeed of our future wants, which his goodness alone is able to supply, as to waste our time in vanity and *nonsense*, when matters of the most momentous nature require our thoughtfulness and concern : and instead of endeavouring to procure pardon for our sins past, and the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to enable us to avoid them for the time to come ; be adding to their number by a contempt of his ordinances ; and a palpable disregard to those means, unto which he has been pleased to annex his grace and favour.

OUR hearts of themselves, we know, are too apt to wander and go astray ; and that it is very difficult with our utmost care, long to preserve them in a posture of devotion : irregular thoughts in spite of ourselves, will sometimes steal into the mind, and upon recollection convince us, how fraught with defects and impurities our best services are, and how much we stand

stand in need of merciful allowances in the judgment of our God: and if this is the case with those, whose desire and endeavour it is, as much as in them lies, to guard against all such interruptions; how great must be the disqualification of others! how unworthy that worship! who by an *affected* indifferency, and *voluntary* wandering, not only call their mind from the objects it ought to be fixed on, but wilfully expose it to every vain imagination and temptation to sin: and who therefore convert the best opportunity of being serviceable to themselves, into their own disadvantage particularly upon this account; as they thereby learn to treat the Deity, and all holy duties with irreverence and unconcern; and by degrees to extinguish that awe and veneration, which naturally seize the soul in our approach to his sanctuary and service.

ONE would think, the sacredness of the place, the number of the people, and the solemnity of the business transacted here,

here, would be sufficient to make us serious, had we no part to act upon our own account, nor any benefit to receive from the common offices of religion: but when every individual is alike dependent upon his Maker, has innumerable mercies to be thankful for, and mercies as innumerable still to implore; it is indeed surprising that all should not alike be employed with the greatest ardour and intenseness, to make the best return they are able for the bounties of heaven, and to draw down from thence its blessings upon their heads. Surely if they had a true value for religion, they would behave religiously; and if they sincerely thought of their improvement in piety, and the salvation of their souls, would be fearful of losing and mis-applying so excellent an opportunity to promote them.

LET us consider; that the time set apart for the publick worship of our great Creator, bears but a small proportion to that, which is allowed us for other matters; and therefore as we may have leisure enough

enough for our secular employments, and for the enjoyment too of innocent conversation and society, let us not encroach upon this small portion, but entirely devote it, as it is intended, to the business of devotion! There is a season for *other things*, and let there be a season for *this*! And whatever would interfere with the principal intendment of it, let us carefully forbear and forego! So that spending our Sabbath *here* agreeably to the divine institution of it, we may continually be making advances in holiness and virtue, and be gradually preparing ourselves for the celebration of *that eternal Sabbath*, when we shall give praise, glory, and worship to the whole sacred Trinity for ever and ever.

AND which that we all may, God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

S E R M O N I I I .
THE
FELICITY OF THE BLESSED
UNALLAYED.

SERMON III

THE

ELICITY OF THE BLESSED

UNALLAYED

S E R M O N III.

MATTHEW xxii. 30.

— BUT ARE AS THE ANGELS OF
GOD IN HEAVEN.

THE grand points which our Saviour
evinces in this part of his Gospel,
are the Resurrection of the Dead and a
Future State : truths, which the Sadduces,
a sect amongst the Jews either did not, or
pretended not to believe. How they came
to fall into this impious persuasion, was
imputable (as some think) to the mis-
judgement of Sadoc, from whom they are
said to derive their name ; and who con-
trary to the generous meaning of his
master,* deduced an inference from his

* Antigonus of Jocho.

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doctrine

doctrine in no wise designed to warrant it. For he, having inculcated to his scholars that they ought to serve God disinterestedly—out of filial love and fear; and not like mercenary slaves in expectation of a reward; Sadoc one of his disciples concluded from this observation, that there was no future reward at all; and consequently that at the expiration of this life, the soul, as well as the body died, never more to renew their vital existence.

BUT others are of an opinion that it was the immorality and viciousness of the lives of the Sadduces that gave rise to, and induced them to embrace this doctrine. They might probably, like some of our modern *free-thinkers and free-livers*, endeavour to argue themselves into a persuasion, that their present transactions were in no future period to be accounted for; as such a notion would best comport with their sensual desires, and leave them the most at liberty to indulge them, without reserve or reluctance; which the apprehension

hension of an hereafter inquest would in some sort prevent.

BUT whatever might produce this belief in them; certain it is, that they were thought to entertain it: and therefore proposed to our Saviour an interrogatory which they judged unanswerable by any who held the doctrine of a resurrection. *There were seven brethren, they observed; who according to the law of Moses, in succession from the eldest to the youngest, married the same woman; and as by their marriage here, they had all, in their opinion, an equal claim to her hereafter, and it was impossible for all to have her; they therefore desired to know in the resurrection whose wife of the seven she should be?*

FROM which our Saviour takes an occasion at once, to give a full solution to their puzzling question, and to rectify their dangerous error, by assuring them that these seven brethren were so far from having an equal claim to her; that in the future state they had none of them any claim at all: every connexion of this sort

being with death dissolved for ever: so that *they who should be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection of the dead, should neither marry, nor be given in marriage; but be as the Angels of God in heaven.* (a)

THEY may not be as the Angels in all respects:—may not be so glorious in their natures—nor so high advanced in beatitude—may not possess either knowledge or power in so extensive a degree—and may not be employed as ministers and executors of the will and pleasure of the supreme and universal King. (b) But they shall enjoy a large participation of their blessedness; and in immortality and incorruptibility be like them—Have an existence as durable as theirs, and be as free from every evil accident and tormenting affection, which might give them pain here, or subject them to it hereafter.

From these words therefore I shall take an occasion to shew, that no passion or

(a) Luke, xx. 35.

(b) Psal. ciii. 20. Heb. i. 14.

et aliis locis.

affection will remain with us beyond the grave, which will occasion the least disquietude in the minds of the blessed above. And this design may be useful particularly upon this account, as it may remove the apprehension of an infelicity, which some see not the possibility of an exemption from even in heaven. They feel *in this life* a tender concern for the welfare and happiness of their friends and relations; and the nearer, and dearer those relations are, in proportion is their concern for their happiness increased: insomuch that whatever fortunate circumstances might attend themselves, they would find little or no real satisfaction and enjoyment in them if such were not partakers in their good fortune; and much less, if distress and misery happened to be their portion. Prosperity would lose much of its relish and sweetness from the consideration of their adversity;—affluence, from their poverty, would be deprived of many of its charms;—and the pleasures of health neither so great nor so numerous, whilst sickness

ness or pain was excruciating them. That this is the case *in the present life*, cannot be denied; and, as they imagine, the same affections must accompany them into the *next*, they conclude the case must be there the same: and consequently, should they themselves be happy enough to be ranked in the number of the blessed; unless those, without whose communion they could taste no true happiness *here*, were to be sharers in their felicity; and much more, if they should be consigned to that dreadful place where wretchedness and woe for ever dwell:—heaven would be no heaven to them; nor could all the glory and bliss of the place prevent and dissipate those dolorous feelings, which their mind must endure from a sense of *their* sad condition. The faithful wife might for ever lament the miserable situation of the dear partner of her earthly pleasures: and the tender parent suffer all the anguish of a disappointed fondness, in the eternal deprivation and sufferings of his beloved child. Infomuch that that place

place which is represented as most delightful, without any alloy, or the least interruption, could not under such circumstances prove so to them; as being insufficient to remove an uneasiness, which must inseparably cleave to them, whilst their powers of reflexion should remain.

THAT this would be the case, supposing, as such do, that our present affections continue with us beyond the grave, cannot be denied: as the same causes under the same circumstances will always be productive of the same effects. But then it ought rather to be concluded, that death will determine them together with our lives; rather than, that we shall carry them with us to heaven; where, we are assured no degree of inquietude or pain is permitted to enter. If in the mansions of blessedness, a pure and unmingled felicity is to be the everlasting reward of the righteous; it is certainly an argument, that every disqualification for the full enjoyment of it, must leave us at our entrance into it: otherwise God would not fulfil

the expectations of, nor his promises to, his faithful servants; and the glorious place of his immediate residence would be so far from yielding to all that are admitted into it a compleat felicity, that many would labour under the bitter agonies of a sympathising and unavailing sorrow.

AND besides — those affections from which some apprehend so much uneasiness hereafter; though they are implanted in us *here* for wise and good reasons; as those reasons in another life cease to subsist, so consequently will those affections for which they were given us. Whilst we sojourn in our present state, there are many social and relative offices to be performed, upon which our mutual comfort and welfare principally depend.

THE duties which are reciprocal in a conjugal state; and betwixt parents and their children, as well as more distant relations and friends; have their foundation in, and flow from those tender affections, with which the wise author of our beings has impressed our natures. Hence arise
all

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all that fondness and felicity in a married life—all that unwearied care and solicitude in the education of, and provision for our children—and all those testimonies of benignity and beneficence of one man to another, which constitute the harmony and happiness of this sublunary world. And which duties, if our minds were once divested of these affections, no positive commands whatever would prevail upon mankind to discharge: but the most unknown stranger might share as largely in their services and regard, as *now* the nearest friend and relation they have.

BUT then these affections which are necessary for these purposes *here*, are no longer so, when death shall have introduced us into *another state*: wherein all degrees of relationship shall cease, and be lost for ever, in that only distinction—the *Children of God*. (a)

FILIAL and parental offices shall then have no place: there will be no submission and dependence on the one side; nor

(a) Luke, xx. 36.

care and solicitude on the other. But as the son, if he has been equal to his father in piety here, will be his equal to all eternity ; so will the wants and expectations of every individual be amply fulfilled from that God, who is the inexhaustible source of all celestial felicity.

OUR love will then be abstracted from every consideration which excited it here ; and have no other object but that on which the divine love itself is fixed ; and consequently we shall love only those, whom the Deity approves : and (though hatred may be a passion too deformed for an heavenly mind) we shall be so sensible of the justice of his judgements, and the demerits of those on whom they are inflicted, that we shall applaud his righteousness in the punishments of the damned, as well as his mercy in the salvation of the saints. For impenitent sinners will be seen by *the spirits of just men made perfect*, (a) in the same light in which they appear to God and Angels ; merely as partakers of one com-

(a) Heb. xii. 23.

mon nature, but as finally *fallen from grace*,
(a) and meriting therefore an eternal exclusion from heavenly beatitudes : and as there is not *with God*, so neither will there be with them, any *respect of persons*, save that which is occasioned by piety and virtue. Amongst those indeed, who have made their improvement in these, their principal care, harmony and love shall for ever dwell : *charity which never faileth* (b) shall universally reign, and make them happy in their own, and in the enjoyments of each other. All private and national distinctions shall be remembered no more ; and some of all ranks, *all people, nations, and languages*, (c) shall compose this celestial society ; and with an entire unanimity and joy, glorify God—the fountain of their blifs.

THERE is an opinion indeed, as ancient, I believe, as Plato, that whatever wrong desires and affections wicked men may contract in this life, will, when the soul

(a) Gal. v. 4. (b) i. Cor. xiii. 8.

(c) Dan. iii. 7. Rev. vii. 9.

leaves the body, still cleave to her, and remain her constant companion to eternal ages; tormenting her with an ever-craving and restless importunity, when there is no possibility of receiving the least gratification. That the drunkard, the voluptuary, and the unclean, will labour under the worst pains of the most ungovernable propensities, without any ability or objects to give them the least indulgence. And in this, it was imagined, would consist a great part of the future hell of those, who in opposition to the dictates of their reason, should debase their nature by such mean and brutal pursuits.

BUT let this be, as it may, it affects not the truth of what I have advanced. For the affections, of which the advocates for this opinion, make mention, instead of inflaming and strengthening them by any compliance, we ought to make it our study and care to restrain and conquer them: and if through our negligence or contempt of duty we suffer them to gain
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an ascendancy over us; the consequence of our folly and disobedience may properly enough become our punishment.

BUT the affections for the cessation of which at death, I have been arguing, are both laudable in themselves, and may with great innocency and propriety be indulged by us: but then as they seem to be implanted in us only to promote our mutual comfort and conveniency during our continuance upon earth; and might prove painful to the best of God's servants if they were to accompany them into heaven: it is therefore reasonable to conclude, that, like our appetites for meat and drink they will leave us at our entrance into the grave: when as all our natural relationships will be dissolved, we shall know none but such as are spiritual: and *whosoever shall have done the will of our Father which is in heaven, the same, as our Saviour observes, shall be our brother, our sister and mother.* (a)

LET us then; as we see what a dignity

(a) Mat. xii. 50.

and

and bliss God has designed for us—that we shall *be as his Angels*; make it our earnest endeavour by a sedulous attention to, and an improvement in, piety and virtue, to fit and prepare ourselves for the fruition of them! We are at present indeed placed but a little *lower than the Angels, (a)* and are distinguished with many wonderful testimonies of the divine notice and favour.

BUT after all—there is no compleat felicity to be here enjoyed: and whatever kind or degree of it may fall to the share of any of us, is not only liable to many interruptions and abatements, but to a total discontinuance. Riches and health are often but of short duration, and woefully convince those who depend upon them of the instability of their nature: nay! even those affections which were imparted to us, to increase the general happiness, and to soften the evils of life, if they happen to be placed upon an improper, or an unfortunate object, pain-

(a) Psal. viii. 5.

fully recoil upon ourselves, and give our misery its keenest edge.

BUT when this present scene shall be shifted, we shall, if we judge it deserving our serious regard, be as *the Angels of God in heaven*:—no more subject to inquietudes and diseases—to misfortunes and mortality; but for ever freed from all the infirmities and evil accidents incident to humanity, to partake in *an ample manner* of the life and beatitude of Angels.

How they live, and in what their beatitudes consist, as it is not revealed, so we cannot define. But as every thing is contrived and disposed by an infinitely wise and good, and powerful being, who is the author of all that we can see, and conceive that is great and glorious: we may be assured that there will not any ingredient be wanting which is necessary to raise their happiness to the highest pitch; but all the attributes of an all-sufficient Deity shall conspire to enhance it; and that happiness shall be secured beyond the power of time or chance: for in the presence

fence of God there is a fulness of joy : and
at his right hand there is pleasure for ever-
more. (a)

UNTO which, that we all in his own
good time may be admitted, God of his
infinite mercy grant, &c.

(a) Psal. xvi. 11.

S E R M O N IV.

THAT BRANCH OF CHARITY

WHICH CONSISTS IN

JUDGING AS FAVOURABLY

AS WE CAN OF

THE FAULTS OF OTHERS,

RECOMMENDED AND ENFORCED.

SERMON IV

THAT BRANCH OF CHARITY

WHICH CONSISTS IN

JUDGING AS FAVOURABLY

AS WE CAN OF

THE FAULTS OF OTHERS

RECOMMENDED AND ENFORCED

S E R M O N I V.

GALATIANS vi. 1.

BRETHREN, IF A MAN BE OVERTAKEN
IN A FAULT, YE WHICH ARE SPIRITU-
AL, RESTORE SUCH AN ONE IN THE
SPIRIT OF MEEKNESS; CONSIDERING
THYSELF, LEST THOU ALSO BE
TEMPTED.

THESE words were probably ad-
dressed to the governors of the Gala-
tian church, in whose hands was lodged
ecclesiastical discipline; reminding them in
the exercise of it, not to be over severe,
but to shew lenity, as far as was consist-
ent with the good of the community; and
the crime from the circumstances attend-
ing it, might be found to deserve. The
punishments which they inflicted, were

of three kinds or degrees : the first consisted in admonitions and reproofs : the second in a temporary exclusion from the privileges of church communion : and the third, in a total excision from it. And in the dispensing of these, it was very fit, in the apostle's opinion, that due regard should be had to the circumstances and nature of the offence, and to the general temper and behaviour of the offender. And though audacious and incorrigible sinners might be judged proper objects of the severest measures, there were great allowances to be made for others, who might inadvertently be overtaken with a fault through surprise and inconsideration : these were to be restored in *the spirit of meekness*,—treated with all that tenderness, and compassion which the nature of the case might reasonably claim.

AND what the apostle here may principally intend as a direction to the governors of the church ; may with great propriety be considered as a rule for every member of it ; that the measure by which
they

they were to regulate their publick censures, may be no less observed by us in passing our private judgments and opinions one of another: that those who have been so unhappy as to fall into sin; which they are so far from persisting in, that their after behaviour seems to indicate an unfeigned sorrow for it; may not have their persons contemned, and their failings magnified by every malicious aggravation and surmise; but be thought and spoke of, with all that candour and commiseration, which good nature and the religion we profess, will authorize and dictate. For, brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, or ye indeed which pretend to the spirit of christianity, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.

AND from these words, I shall take an occasion to press upon you from a consideration or two, that branch of charity which consists in judging as favourably as we can of the faults of others.—Such faults I mean as the apostle here speaks of; those

which a person may be *overtaken in*, or surprised into; and not those which proceed from an inveterately wicked mind, or an habit of sinning. For when men give themselves up to the ways of vice, and *to work all uncleanness with greediness*; (a) are so far from avoiding the occasions of evil, that it is their daily study and delight to follow it; it is our duty then to discountenance them and their proceedings by every method which christian prudence may suggest: and if we are not in a capacity to attempt their reformation; or to attempt it with any probability of success; we ought, as much as possible, to withdraw ourselves from all intercourse and communion with them; being such people as the apostle has enjoined us *to note, and to have no company with them, that they may be ashamed.* (b)

BUT that we ought to judge in charity, as favourably as we can of the faults of others, is evident from St. Paul's definition of that most christian grace; wherein

(a) Eph. iv. 19.

(b) ii. Thes. iii. 14.

amongst other particulars he gives us *these*; that *charity thinketh no evil*, (a) that is, which it can possibly avoid;—*beareth*, or rather as it may be rendered, *concealeth all things*, which tend to our neighbour's detriment and disreputation;—and *believeth and hopeth all things* which make for his credit, and may help to diminish or remove any load of infamy under which he may have laboured. Charity indeed does not require us to deprive ourselves of our senses; to shut our eyes, or our ears lest we should see, or hear any ill of others. And in a world so abounding with all manner of wickedness, as it is impossible but it will frequently fall under our cognisance; so we cannot reverse our judgments concerning it; and out of tenderness to the actor, think evil good, and vice virtue. What is true, and appears upon reasonable evidence to be so, may, and ought to be believed without any imputation of a culpable credulity: and it seems as ridiculous to tell men that they must not give

(a) 1. Cor. xiii. 57.

credence to what seems in itself credible, as that they must not make use of their reason and senses in judging of facts; but reject every thing as false, which they may not happen to approve. And besides, if out of charity to an offender, we refuse to believe any thing which may tend to his disreputation; we may become guilty of uncharitableness towards others; by calling in question without any just cause, the verity of their testimony, and suspecting them to be capable of the basest contrivances and designs: merely because a friendly regard for the person ill spoke of, may render us unwilling to listen to any reports, which may either blacken; or make his character less respectable.

BUT though we must believe whatever appears to be true; we ought not to believe any thing, but what appears to be so. Not to give credit to every idle tale to our neighbour's disadvantage, nor to suffer our ill natured passions to bias our judgments in his disfavour: but so far as in conscience and equity we can find any room

room for contradiction or mitigation, *there to interpose the offices of charity and friendship in behalf of the absent and the injured.* We should shew a disposition rather to *excuse* than to *condemn*; and to put the most tender construction upon actions which cannot be denied, rather than endeavour to render them more odious by conjectures which have little or no foundation, but in our own busy and suspicious imaginations.

IN many instances of misconduct there are several circumstances which a good natured man will find out, which will make the crime appear to him in a different light, from that, in which a malevolent mind will chuse to view it: and was the delinquent to be judged by them, his crime would be as differently censured, as if it was scarcely in any one circumstance the same. The infirmity of human nature—the strength and importunity of temptation—the season in which it was offered—together with the violence of passion which sometimes makes us deaf to,
and

and breaks through, the feeble restraints of reason and conscience, would all plead in his behalf to the one; and incline him more to *pity* his fall than to *triumph* in his disgrace and ruin. Whilst all these would by the other be little attended to, or entirely overlooked; and the dark side of the crime minutely scanned in order to justify the severest sentence. But there needs no argument to prove, which of these two is displaying the most amiable temper, and acting most conformably to the mild and charitable spirit of the gospel. For, says our Saviour, *judge not, that ye be not judged.* (a) And the reason he assigns for such prohibition is certainly sufficient to make us extremely cautious in this matter. Because *with what judgment ye judge, says he, ye shall be judged, and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.* And there is another consideration too, implied by him, which should most effectually put a stop to all our severity in judging. *Why beholdest thou the mote,* says

(a) Mat. vii. 1, &c,

he,

he, *that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own?* A consciousness of our own failings, perhaps more and greater, than those which we know of other men, should dispose us to look with an eye of compassion upon the failings of our fellow creature: otherwise *whilst we are judging others, we are most certainly condemning ourselves.* (a) And if it should be so in reality, what it is to be feared, is frequently the case; that men have lived in the secret indulgence of sins of a deeper die, than those they have reason to accuse others of; and owe the superior esteem of mankind only to a more artful management, by which they have been able to impose upon the world, and to conceal their vices from public observation: how should they be afraid and ashamed of those heavy censures they scruple not with a face of assurance to pass upon the actions of other men, when if *their own* were as fully known, their guilt and deformity would greatly exceed!

(a) Rom. ii. 1.

The

The apprehensions of those judgments, they liberally pronounce to be due to others; should, one would think, make them tremble for themselves: and it would be more prudent as well as more christian, by a sincere sorrow and humiliation for *their own sins*, to endeavour to procure their reconciliation with God, than to incur a larger share of his displeasure, by severe animadversions upon *other men's misconduct*.

WHY, says the apostle, *dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.* (a) As we must all be summoned before the bar of Divine Justice, it would be a much better employment of our time, to be diminishing the charges that may be produced against ourselves, than be maliciously producing charges against our fellow delinquents: and instead of adding to all our other offences *that* of uncharitableness, endeavour to qualify ourselves in some measure for the receipt of mercy, by manifesting a willingness to shew it, as far as we can, to all mankind.

(a) Rom. xiv. 10.

BUT

BUT if we have been so happy to escape the pollutions of grosser impurities; and to have our conversation in the world free from those more heinous vices, into which we may observe many others to fall; the apostle nevertheless assigns a reason why we should behave with candour and lenity towards them; which is, in consideration that we ourselves may *also be tempted*, and if we are tempted, may likewise fall. So that that which is now their misfortune, may possibly in time become our own: as if the same trials are permitted to befall us, we may not acquit ourselves any better under them;—shew no more steadiness and resolution in the cause of virtue than they have done before.

WHEN there are no solicitations to draw us from our duty, there is no difficulty attending the discharge of it, nay, the pleasure arising from a sense of it, will be an inducement to a perseverance in it, unless a seemingly greater pleasure shall solicit our choice, and seduce us from it. The person for instance, who suffers no temptation

tation to immodesty and intemperance, whose passions are calm and regular, neither violent in themselves, nor quickly excited; may find it easy and pleasant to persist in a course of chastity and sobriety. What might be strong allurements to others, may appear none to him; and those occasions to sin which may ensnare and ruin *their* virtue; may either not meet *him* at all, or pass unnoticed, without endangering *his*. So that his innocency may be owing more to the nature of his constitution, or the kindness of providence which has been pleased not to subject him to any severe trials, than to any superior veneration and attachment in him to God and goodness. Had the case been with him in all respects the same as with others;—Had he been formed with the same strong propensities, and situated under circumstances altogether the same; he might have found himself as little disposed to a resistance, and have given us a like melancholy instance of the frailty of humanity.

JUDAS and Peter stand upon record, the

one

one for betraying; and the other for denying his Master: but who can pronounce that they were the only two in the number of the apostles, that would have acted with so much baseness and timidity? Happy perhaps it was for the rest, that they were not so tried; who possibly might have been no more proof against the temptations that assaulted *them*, nor have expressed any more affection and fidelity to their Lord. However, as it is impossible to determine how we ourselves should behave, under any trial which we have not experienced; it is reason sufficient why we should judge and speak of others, with all imaginable modesty and candour: and not only to take great heed lest we fall, but to be cautious how we censure the fall of others: lest if we should be so unhappy to follow their steps, the virulency we have shewn, should fall heavy upon our own pates; and we should be excluded all pity both from God and man.

If we stand at present, and have hitherto retained our integrity, let us with a pious gratitude

gratitude of heart, ascribe all that we *are*, as well as all that we *have*, to God! And if we must be judging—let it be ourselves! And leave every body else to the final decision of the supreme Judge; who only knows the true dispositions of his creatures, and the nature and circumstances of all their actions; and who therefore only is capable of passing a righteous judgment. And if we take a serious review of our own past lives and conversations, we may probably find matter enough for our utmost humiliation and penitence: and if we make a proper use of such discovery, shall be too solicitously concerned for our own safety and salvation, to have either leisure or inclination to sit in judgment over other men.

AND this we shall experience to be not only the most christian, but the most prudent method. Since those who speak the most *ill* of others, are generally themselves spoken the most *ill* of;—the world being seldom behind hand in such retaliations, but always ready to repay every unpleasing
freedom

S E R M O N IV. 81

freedom of speech, with speeches no less unpleasing. Whereas soft and candid interpretations of other men's actions, will forcibly engage their esteem and friendship;—will incline them to throw a veil over every weakness which it is in their power to hide; and to lessen the odium and scandal of those, which they are not able totally to conceal: upon every occasion shewing an unwillingness to give pain to *those*, who never willingly gave pain to them. And when we come to stand before the awful bar of Divine Justice, where the dispositions of our minds will be particularly attended to, charity of all christian graces will most powerfully recommend us to the favour of our Judge: *who with the same measure that we have meted to others, will mete to us again:—* and for the lenity we have expressed to them, be less *extreme to mark* what we ourselves *have done amiss*.

Now to God the Father, &c.

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...of speech, with speeches as to
 ...Whitson, left and candid in-
 ...of other men's actions, will
 ...to engage their esteem and regard.
 ...will incline them to throw a veil
 ...every weakness, which it is in their
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 ...And when we come to stand
 ...the awful bar of Divine Justice,
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 ...and charity, all
 ...will itself powerfully re-
 ...in the favor of our subject,
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 ...we have expended in
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How to Get the Right...

SEE

S E R M O N V.

THE
WICKEDNESS AND FOLLY
OF
WASTE AND PROFUSION,
DISPLAYED.

2. F. R. M. O. N. V.

WICKEDNESS AND FOLLY

WASTE AND PROFLIGACY

WASTE AND PROFLIGACY

WASTE AND PROFLIGACY

WASTE AND PROFLIGACY

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WASTE AND PROFLIGACY

SERMON V.

JOHN vi. 12.

— GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS
THAT REMAIN, THAT NOTHING BE
LOST.

OUR blessed Lord having miracu-
lously multiplied *five barley loaves and*
two small fishes (a) into more than a suffi-
ciency for the sustenance of five thousand
people; did not proceed to the distributi-
on of them before he had offered up to
the gracious author of all mercies his pi-
ous acknowledgments for them, and
implored upon the use of them *his blessing*;
When he had given thanks, it is said, he distri-
buted to his disciples (b) in order that they
might impart to the people; but he did
not distribute without first giving thanks;

(a) Ver. 9.

(b) Ver. 11.

to remind us, no doubt, from whom all our supplies are originally derived, as well as the benefits we receive from them: that both our gratitude for what we *have*, and our supplications for what we *wish*, may be addressed to him who bestows *them* upon us, and *his* blessing upon *them*: and without whose bountiful goodness we neither could have them at all, nor could receive any comfort or refreshment from them:—so that by this means whilst he satisfied the corporal wants of the multitude, he afforded them some spiritual instruction; furnishing them at once *with that meat which perisheth*, and with that which was intended *to endure* with them *unto everlasting life.* (a)

AND that he might give the multitude a stronger conviction of his omnipotent power; and find a seasonable opportunity of inculcating another useful lesson, he provides not only what would barely suffice for their present support, but a great superfluity: and enjoins them carefully to

(a) Ver. 27.

collect

collect it together, either for *themselves* upon some future occasion, or for the benefit of *others* who might labour under the same want which they had done. For the people after they had satisfied their appetites, might probably express no care and thoughtfulness concerning what remained; especially as they found themselves in company with *one*, who in a *like exigency*, they doubted not, was able to furnish them with a *like supply*: when they were filled, *Jesus therefore said unto his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost*:—giving them to understand that though he could create for their use, as much, and as frequently, as he pleased, no reason should thence be infered for carelessness and waste; but that how great plenty soever there was, no part of it should be wilfully destroyed; but reserved either for *their own*, or for the necessities of *others*, to whom providence might not have ministred with so much liberality.—*Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost.*

FROM which words, (as the meaning in them may justly be extended to every other blessing of providence, as well as to that to which they immediately relate) we may fairly conclude that we ought not in any wise to waste, whatever the bounty of heaven has bestowed upon us; and that whenever we do so, *whether through design, or want of care*, we act contrary to the will of God, and the duty we owe to him.—And therefore I shall endeavour to dissuade you from it, by laying before you, first, the wickedness;—and secondly, the folly of every species of waste and profusion.

Now there are two extremes, with regard to the good things of this life, into which men are liable to fall: the one an *anxious solicitude* for what they have not; the other an *idle spending* of what they have: the one sort of people seeming to think providence has not been kind enough; the other misapplying the kindnesses which they have received, The conduct of both

is wrong :—and the former should learn not to *covet* what God has denied ; nor the latter indiscreetly to *squander* what he has given. For if we acknowledge the existence of the supreme governor of the world, and that he has any hand in the disposition of human affairs ;—that not only the time, but the manner of our being in life is principally owing to his providence : and that we stand accountable to him our Lord and benefactor, for the use of every favour he is pleased to confer upon us : we cannot but look upon whatever we have, not only as his donation, but upon ourselves as obliged to conform in the administration of it to his good pleasure : and that therefore we are not at liberty to treat his gifts according to the dictates of our own capricious fancies, but are bound so to apply them, as may best answer the ends for which they were bestowed. Now the end which providence intended by imparting to us the good things of this life, was, first our own, and then the comfort and felicity of others :
that

that we should by a prudent and sober management of them render our lives as happy, as the circumstances of our present state will permit; and contribute, as much as is in our power, to promote the happiness of all about us: according to the apostle's injunction, *as every man hath received the gift, even so should we minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* (a) Our own wants and conveniences claim, no doubt, our first regard; but we should not be unmindful of the wants and conveniences of others; but endeavour to be the more extensively useful and beneficent, *in proportion to the abundance with which God has blessed us.* But as the covetous man through a ridiculous attachment to the world, excludes both himself and others from the comforts which might be derived from what he has; so the extravagant man by his waste and profusion, not only oftentimes destroys his own happiness, but deprives himself of the ability to be instru-

(a) i. Pet. iv. 10.

mental to the happiness of others, who have a christian title to a share of his endowments:—at least, he cannot be serviceable to so many, nor in such a degree, as he otherwise might, and as both *God* and *man* expect he should be. By pursuing a course of expensive diversions, or gratifying a luxurious appetite, he reduces himself to straits and difficulties; and is so little able to be assisting to others, that himself not seldom stands in need of assistance.—And is it not a melancholy reflection, that they, whom providence has singled out to convey its blessings to mankind, should so grossly embezzle and pervert them? That instead of being faithful servants in the household of their master, they should waste the talent committed to their trust, whilst they ought to have improved it? Converting those favours into an occasion of vice and infelicity, which afforded them great opportunities for virtue, and might have redounded to their endless bliss.

LET us cast our eyes around and observe the

the behaviour of many amongst us, and we may perceive them lavishing such a part of their fortunes, and of the fruits of their labour too, in wanton excesses, as would suffice for the maintenance of numerous families!—To prepare a *fashionable* meal for the entertainment of the great, the waste, that is said to be made, is shameful and shocking: many good things are utterly spoiled and destroyed, merely to embellish the table of the rich, or to heighten the taste of a single dish on it, which numbers of poor creatures would most thankfully receive: who not seldom are labouring under the want of the common necessities of life, suffering all the hardships incident to a depressed condition, and languishing under the pains of destitution of friends—of food, and of raiment; whilst their opulent neighbours are revelling in every degree of *riotous living*. And can we seriously think such proceedings not offensive to God Almighty? Or that when he dispensed to mankind his favours, such was the purpose for which he intended them?—Or rather does
it

it not appear consonant to humanity, as well as to scripture, that they, whom he has surrounded with affluence, should distribute their superfluity to those that need; should, as far as their ability will permit, diffuse blessings and comfort to all around them? That the abundance of the rich might be a *supply for the wants*(a) of the poor: so that they who *had gathered much* might have *nothing over*, and they who *had gathered little* might have *no lack*.

THAT men of high birth and station should appear both at home and abroad agreeable to the rank they hold, is upon every consideration commendable and requisite: but there may be *economy* in a great house, as well as a small one; and all wilful waste in both should be cautiously avoided, as it is repugnant to the will and design of the gracious donor; and a criminal abuse of those good things, which he has entrusted in such hands, to be seasonably communicated for the support and comfort of his indigent creatures.

(a) ii. Cor. viii. 14.

BUT extravagancy is an evil not confined only to the rich, but may frequently be found amongst those below them; their inferiors being too fond of imitating in this respect the example of their superiors; and in proportion to their circumstances, are as guilty of profusion as the most lavish of *them* can be. But as this is the rule; *be merciful after thy power; if thou has much give plentifully; if thou hast little do thy diligence gladly to give of that little; (a)* that person who wastes the little he has, is culpable (though not in the same degree) as well as he who wastes much. If he has only *one talent*, his extravagancy may not be equal to *his* to whom was committed *ten*; yet he may be altogether devoid of that prudence in œconomy, which is absolutely necessary to the management of the talent he has; and may render himself unable to contribute that small portion to the relief of the poor, unto which by the law and will of heaven they stand entitled. And how many are there in middle, and even in

(a) Tobit, iv. 8.

low life, who, if they would properly guard against all extravagancies, retrench their unnecessary expences, and superintend their domestick affairs with due circumspection and care; might, if they had inclination, spare a comfortable share of their good things for the use of their necessitous neighbours; who either by sickness, old age, the burthen of a family, or unavoidable misfortunes are become fit objects of their christian compassion and liberality? And instead of enhancing their guilt by a misapplication of what God has given, might, by such a charitable disposition, *lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they might attain eternal life.*(a)

BUT secondly, waste and profusion is not only a wickedness, but a very great folly. It is not more truly said of any one vice than this, that it generally brings along with it, its own punishment: since extravagancy is the sure way to poverty; and they who wilfully waste what they have,

(a) i. Tim. vi. 19.

often live sorely to want what they have wilfully wasted. The prodigal in the gospel (a) experienced the truth of this; and every other prodigal as well as he, has reason to expect a condition something like his: since it seems to be the natural consequence of such conduct; and is as often unpitied too, as it is deserved. For when men lose their substance in this way, they frequently lose their friends besides; and obtain nothing in exchange, but coolness and contempt from the world in general. And whatever pleasure there may be found in spending; the pains of want with these affecting aggravations will make them pay very dear for. And very fit it seems to be, that they who have abused the blessings of heaven to criminal purposes, should be taught to know the value of them, by suffering those inconveniences, a deprivation of them is sure to be attended with.

WHEN the wealth of the profuse happens to be very great, every indiscretion

(a) Luke, xv. 13, &c.

of this kind will not be so sensibly felt. But a constant repetition of such indiscreet acts will finally exhaust it, and reduce to a state of ruin the most opulent amongst us: and what to a tender mind will be a dreadful consideration—will entail beggary and wretchedness upon his unoffending posterity. And how many children, who, being born at least to an easy fortune; by the profusion of those, who ought to have been their kindest friends and protectors, have had nothing transmitted to them but such distresses and difficulties, as their bitterest enemy would not have wished to befall them: and who instead of reflecting upon their parents with an affectionate regret, cannot but silently load their memory with reproach and shame.

AND what is still a farther aggravation of the folly of extravagancy, that as it leads to beggary, so it often terminates in injustice. For people who have been used in too free a manner to indulge their appetites and passions, will very reluctantly submit to those straits and necessities

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which it naturally tends to bring them into; but will be too apt, in order to conceal a meanness of which they are ashamed, and know not how to bear, to endeavour to make their wonted appearance at the expence of *others*, when they are no longer able to support it at their *own*. And will therefore contract debts which they neither have a reasonable prospect, nor perhaps any solicitude to discharge; and so by their extravagancy may involve their well-meaning and friendly neighbours in that irremediable calamity, which they have very foolishly carved out for themselves and their families. A practice no less cruel, than it is iniquitous; as it is contrary to the principles of humanity and gratitude, as well as to the rules of common justice, and fixes upon the doer a scandalous imputation in the opinion of men, added to, *what is indeed much more to be dreaded*, an high degree of guilt in the sight of God.

I KNOW it has often been said, that extravagancy is of publick utility—that
though

though it impoverishes some, it enriches others—and the more the profuse squander away, the greater is the advantage which others receive. But supposing this to be true; what rational encouragement can for extravagancy hence be collected? For the good it may at any time happen to be attended with, is not to be ascribed to the profuse man's virtue; since this was merely accidental, and no part of his design: what he had in view, was the gratification of his appetites and passions; and notwithstanding some little advantages might accrue to others from it, no thanks were due to him for this, because it entered not into his consideration. And if his profusion has led him into vice and proved a snare to his integrity, whatever good others may casually have reaped from it, will be a poor consolation to him, and no justification of his misconduct.—And besides wealth by being lavished in an indiscreet manner, generally falls into improper hands; either into such as do not want it; or into such as will use it

for the like criminal purposes. And much better would it therefore be upon all accounts, to bestow upon others with proper discernment and care, what is more than a decent provision for ourselves, than by a vicious practice to scatter our good with an undistinguishing profusion. For though it is fit that all wilful waste should be discountenanced; all discreet liberality should be encouraged: since *covetousness* is odious and hurtful, as well as *extravagancy*; and though it is necessary that we should save all that (considering our condition in life) we *decently* can, it should not be to *feed an inordinate desire of riches*, but that we may be the more useful in our generation, and be capable of communicating to those that need with the greater liberality. And the more prudently men manage their fortunes and their domestick affairs, the more will their ability in this respect be increased; so that their neighbours may find the advantage of their frugality, as by it they may be able to impart to them such a share

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share of comfort, as a contrary conduct would have left them without power to do.

IN what particulars the expences of those who are too lavish are to be abridged, as the circumstances and situation of men are so very different, it would be a task both difficult and disagreeable to point out. Every person that will think seriously and prudently upon the subject, must be his own best judge: he must be best acquainted with the expences attending his method of living; and with the expences his income is able to bear: and should willingly incur none that can be avoided, which are likely to be followed with inconveniences to himself or his dependents. There are instances enow which a little recollection may furnish us with, wherein many run into idle extravagancies—into pleasures and luxuries to which their fortunes are by no means adequate, generally to their *own* detriment, and often to the detriment of *others*. Every thing of this kind should be cauti-

ously forborn :—and we should lay a restraint upon those appetites and inclinations which would lead us to them ; left by listening to their suggestions, we first consume our own substance ; and then make too free with that of other men :—and so not only deprive ourselves of all that satisfaction and felicity, which always attend a regular and prudent conduct, and stand exposed to those insults and contempts which are the sure concomitants of an indigent state : but bring upon ourselves the charge of having abused the blessings of a kind providence, and this perhaps with the fearful aggravations of injustice, and many other immoralities.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R M O N VI.

T H E
U N R E A S O N A B L E N E S S
A N D
I M P I E T Y O F S U I C I D E
C O N S I D E R E D.

THE M. O. W. V. H. S.

THE ASSOCIATION

PROPERTY OF THE ASSOCIATION

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SERMON VI.

JOB xiv. 14.

— ALL THE DAYS OF MY APPOINT-
ED TIME WILL I WAIT, UNTIL MY
CHANGE COME.

THERE are few, or none here, I
hope, that are unacquainted with
the history of this pious worthy : how,
God Almighty, though he was his avowed
servant and favourite, permitted him to
be afflicted to a degree beyond what mere
man ever endured : — and this, not only
that he might give him an opportunity of
evidencing his obedience and submission
to his divine will ; but that he might be
proposed as a standing example, and com-
fort to good men in all succeeding ages ;
who by contemplating his behaviour,
might

might receive instruction and encouragement, to put in practice the duties of patience and resignation to God, even under the most adverse circumstances that could befall them.

FROM a remarkable affluence, he was reduced to as remarkable an indigence; insomuch that he who was once *the greatest of all the men of the east*, (a) became, by a sad reverse, one of the meanest and most contemptible in it.—His children who might have yielded some consolation and assistance to him in his distress, to add to his misfortunes, were overwhelmed by a sudden destruction.—And as if the deprivation of all that he had, was not a sufficient affliction; he had the additional calamity of a filthy and loathsome disease to struggle with, by which his body was overspread *with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown*. (b)

IN such a condition, life must indeed be very uncomfortable;—and sad cause we have to believe, that many impatient

(a) Chap. i. 3.

(b) Chap. ii. 7.

people

people in our days, with the fourth part of the misery he sustained, would put an hasty period to it, rather than live to endure it: who, if providence should dispense, what they do not approve, nor easily can bear; would fear not audaciously to fly in the face of heaven, and unthankfully to return the life it gave; as if determined not to live at all; — unless in the manner and state they chuse.—But the behaviour of holy Job affords us another lesson:—*The Lord gave, says he, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. (a) And shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil? (b)*

AND though he had abundant reason to believe that death would for ever determine all his sufferings, and therefore breathes up his wishes to God that *he would be pleased to bide him in the grave: (c)* yet he very well knew, that any method to shorten his life would be a presumptuous encroachment upon the preroga-

(a) Chap. i. 21. (b) Chap. ii. 10. (c) Chap. xiv. 13.

tive of his maker; who as he was the only being that could *give*, was the only being that should *take* it away; and to whose good pleasure it was the indispensable duty of all his creatures to submit, in dispensations seemingly the most hard and unaccountable. *All the days*, therefore says he, *of my appointed time will I wait, until my change come.*

AND from these words I shall take an occasion, in order to prevent a practice which every considering mind cannot but look on with great horror and concern, to lay before you,—First the unreasonableness of self-murder. And secondly the impiety of it, and the dreadful danger to which it must expose men's souls.

Now in all self-murderers, who purpose and perpetrate their own death, with design and deliberation, we must necessarily suppose some extraordinary uneasiness oppressing their minds; which a desire to fly from, is able to prevail with them to counteract the first and strongest impression upon our natures;—that of self-preservation; which

which can make them weary of, and resolved to part with life, which the generality of mankind are most solicitous to prolong; and are ready to part with every thing else to procure the safety and continuance of that. And as this uneasiness must arise from some cause, either real or imaginary; so this cause must be owing either to what we could, or to what we could not avoid. Now if it is owing to any thing which we might have avoided; that is, if the uneasiness we labour under is brought upon ourselves, by any wilful imprudence and indiscretions, we have all the reason in the world to bear it patiently. *Wherefore, says the prophet, doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? (a)* He cannot expect the constitution of things to be altered in compliment to his follies and immoralities; but must take the blame and shame, of every wilful deviation from that law of reason and conscience, which was designed to be the regulator of his

(a) Lam. iii. 39.

conduct;

conduct; and without murmuring submit to the natural consequence, or the just retribution of his own choice and proceedings. And instead of being willing to shorten the number of his days; because he has involved himself in some painful inconveniences, he should rather wish for future opportunities, to rectify and retrieve the errors of his past behaviour, that he might re-instate himself in that condition of peace and felicity, from which they have been the occasion of his fall.

BUT if this uneasiness is owing to any thing which he had not the power to avoid:—if unforeseen, and unsought for misfortunes have embarrassed our worldly affairs;—or the loss of relations and friends plunged us into difficulties we know not how to extricate ourselves from: we ought to consider, that all events are lodged in the hands of an infinitely wise and kind providence, which either dispenses to us, or at least *permits* whatever can befall us: and that therefore time may bring us a relief which all our sagacity

S E R M O N VI. 111

city is not able to spy out:—or what we undergo, may be designed as a trial to exercise and to prove our grace and virtues; such as our faith, our patience, and reliance upon God: and that therefore if we properly acquit ourselves in this season of probation, exemplifying an unshaken confidence in his mercy, and a due submission and resignation to his divine will; we may entertain a comfortable hope, that our future reward shall be enhanced in proportion to the degree of our present sufferings. And surely to a christian, who has the promises of God's infallible word to animate and support him, the consideration that what he sustains is the good pleasure of heaven, and that heaven shall be the recompence he shall finally receive for a patient endurance of it, must in the midst of his sorrows be an unspeakable consolation; and encourage him to travel on in the paths of life however painful, till God shall be pleased to give him his dismissal, and exchange his troubles for bliss and glory. But if we fret

fret and repine at his dispensations; resolving not to bear, what his wisdom and goodness may not think proper to remove; but to put an end to our sufferings, by putting an end to our lives; we, in effect, declare that we will no longer be subject to the rules of his government; but will follow the dictates of our own rash wills, in opposition to, and in contempt of, what he judges best. For if it be his will that we should suffer; it is our duty, and should be our endeavour to shew an absolute conformity to it: and the less we have deserved to suffer, the greater advantages will accrue to us from our sufferings: *as they will finally work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* (a) *Wherefore, in the words of the apostle, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator;* (b) *who will assuredly fulfil his word to all his truly obedient servants, and make*

(a) ii. Cor. iv. 17.

(b) i. Pet. iv. 19.

their

their sufferings a passage to, and an enhancement of, their future blessedness.

BUT secondly, self-murder is not only unreasonable in itself; but an act of great impiety, and attended with manifest danger of eternal damnation. That all suitable allowances will be made for the melancholy and distractions of men's minds, when they come to be judged by an all-merciful being, we may very well presume: but as it is impossible for us, with any exactness to determine, to what their malady may be owing—how far they have themselves been accessory to it; — and to what a degree it must affect them to render them excusable in the sight of God, it is the safest way for us with regard to particular people to suspend our judgments; lest we should *confine*, or *stretch*, too much the mercy of our Judge; who will, no doubt, extend it to all his creatures, so far as his justice, and the laws of his government will permit.

BUT as to those, who, with their reason and understanding about them, perpetrate

petrate a crime of so horrid a nature; so far as the revelation of God acquaints us with the terms of our acceptance with him; we cannot but pronounce them guilty of great impiety, and that they incur a most fearful hazard of exclusion from his favour. Life, we know, is the gift of God, which only the giver has right to dispose of: he has sent us into *the* world to finish a work he has given us to do, to prepare us for the enjoyment of beatitudes in a *better*, much superior to any we can here receive: and as he only knows when this work is concluded, so he only has a just power to discharge us from it; so that by depriving ourselves of life, we not only invade his sovereignty but are guilty of great ingratitude and disobedience towards him.

AND this crime has this fearful and peculiar consideration attending it,—that we cannot by repentance for it, entitle ourselves through Christ to God's forgiveness of it. Any other crime we possibly may survive,—may become truly sensible of and penitent for: but this crime in it

own nature, prevents and precludes all opportunities for repentance; and introduces the horrid perpetrator of it into the presence of God, with the uncanceled guilt of a most audacious violation of his will and law, cleaving to his wretched soul. For repentance in the very nature of it, implies sincere sorrow for what we have done amiss; and unfeigned resolutions of future amendment: but nothing of these can possibly be found, in the determined purpose of the self-murderer. For to say he is sorry for what he is resolved, and under no necessity, to commit, is a manifest contradiction: sorry he may be, for the cause which impells him to the action, but he can never be so, for the action itself. For sorrow naturally contains in it, an ardent wish and desire, that what we sorrow for, had not been done: but how can a man, previously to the doing of an action, can desire *that* not to be done, which, as a free agent he is contriving and purposed to do, seems impossible to define.

If therefore by an act of suicide (which is

impious in itself, and for which it is not possible to express any contrition and penitence in an after behaviour) any person shall expect to put an *end* to his troubles, he may probably find himself woefully deceived, and that it will prove only the *beginning* of them : as no misery in our present state can equal *that* which, for such an atrocious crime, there is reason to fear, is prepared in another.

EVERY man who meditates seriously upon that future account he must one day give to the awful Judge of quick and dead ; would make it his earnest endeavour to *grow in grace* and goodness continually, that every day might surpass the preceding one in piety and virtue, and that at the close of life, he might be found in a frame of mind more devout and heavenly, than in any former period he had been able to attain : how dreadful then must it be, to leave this world, and to enter into the next, with hands imbrued in our own blood ! —to suffer the last act of our lives to exceed every other in impiety ;

ety;—and to dare to throw ourselves into eternity in defiance of the will and law of our Maker and Judge!

THESE considerations, if seriously revolved in our minds; may have a proper effect in laying a restraint upon our hands; and deterring us from the fatal purpose, of rushing into the presence of God, under such deplorable circumstances: not forgetting to reflect upon that disgrace and ignominy, with which the memory of self-murderers is always loaded; as well as upon that pain and anguish, they naturally occasion in the breasts of their nearest and dearest friends.

LET it then be our care so to behave; as not wilfully to bring ourselves into such an unhappy condition in life, as may render it irksome and burthensome to us, and incline us to listen to any temptation to take it away!

AND whatever trials and afflictions shall befall us by the ordination and permission of Almighty God, let us run with patience the race he shall set before us! For if we

believe, that he governs all things by his providence *here*, and has provided a future felicity for us—his creatures *hereafter*; let us put our full *trust and confidence* in his *mercy*; and he will either *remove* from us the bitter *cup*, or enable us to drink it with a christian magnanimity.

LET us call to mind the sufferings of those, who are recorded in scripture for our comfort and example! And more especially, let us ruminate upon the behaviour of the Redeemer of mankind! *Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God. For, says the apostle, consider him, that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. (a)* Follow the pattern he has proposed to you under *his sufferings*, as a sure means to attain to *his glory*! And however hard your lot may seem; however grievous to be born the portion dispensed to you;—*in patience and well doing possess ye your souls!*

(a) Heb. xii. 2, &c.

Resolve to wait *all the days of your appointed time*, which cannot be long; *until your change come*; which will prove then not for the worse, but infinitely for the better: — a change of sorrow, for joy; — a change of pain, for pleasure, — and the change of a life, hourly liable to vexations and disquietudes, for beatitudes uninterrupted and endless in the presence and communion of our God.

UNTO which happy estate, that we all may finally attain, God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

S E R M O N V I I .

T H E

N A T U R E O F O P P R E S S I O N

E X P L A I N E D ,

W I T H D I S S U A S I V E S

A G A I N S T I T .

SERMON VII.

THE

NATURE OF OPPRESSION

EXPLAINED

WITH DISCUSSIVES

AGAINST IT.

S E R M O N VII.

PROVERBS, xxii. 16.

HE THAT OPPRESSETH THE POOR TO
INCREASE HIS RICHES, AND HE THAT
GIVETH TO THE RICH, SHALL SURELY
COME TO WANT.

HAD Solomon in his compositions been left only to those great abilities, with which it pleased God to distinguish him, his writings as the observations and sentiments of the wisest man that ever lived, had surely merited our attention and regard. For whoever is not inflated with pride, or biaſſed by conſiderations of ſelf intereſt, would always judge it prudent to liſten to the advice of his ſuperior in underſtanding, and to pay a proper deference to his authority and judgment: nay! he would be glad

glad to have recourse to such a counsellor upon every occasion of importance, and would thankfully receive and pursue his directions. But when we call to mind, that though it was the pen of Solomon that wrote, one infinitely greater was his dictator: that the unerring spirit of wisdom was his guide, *(a)* and that he was authorized to make known to mankind the methods of Divine Providence and the will of his Creator; we must not look upon his writings as the word of a man however great, *but as they are in truth the word of God: (b)* so that in this light, they not only deserve but command our observance; and not to pay it to them is more than an argument of our *folly*,—it will be imputed to us as *sin*. If our fellow creature shall speak, we may, if we please, refuse to hear him; and be chargeable for our refusal with nothing farther than incivility or imprudence. But if the Almighty shall signify to us his pleasure, we have no longer any such liberty; we are then

(a) ii. Tim. iii. 16.

(b) i. Thef. ii. 13.

obliged

obliged to give ear and to obey; and not to do so, is both dangerous and great impiety: for besides the guilt of counter-acting the will of our God and King, for which we must be responsible hereafter; we have reason to expect all those *present* evils which he has threatened to deter us from such perverseness and contempt. And his temporal judgments, as we may many times observe (and probably might observe much oftner, were we privy to the causes of his dispensations, and to the reasons upon which he acts) we shall find frequently suited to the nature of that sin by which we incurred them: instances in proof of this might easily be produced, was it not thought unnecessary to take up your time in enumerating them. Let that therefore with which the words of the text has furnished us, at present suffice: *He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.* That is, they who pay no regard to the wants and distresses of the poor, as it is plain, that they who increase them

them by their oppressions, and they who lavish their bounty upon the rich, do not; shall either themselves, or in their posterity be reduced to the same necessitous condition. For though they may pursue such methods, as they judge most likely to secure themselves from it; the one, by multiplying their gain at the expence of the poor, and the other by overlooking their exigencies to purchase the friendship and favour of the rich; yet all this shall avail them nothing; but either in their own persons, or in their descendants, they *shall surely come to want.*

AND what the Almighty has here denounced, is, I doubt not, in numerous instances verified amongst us: insomuch that in many of the revolutions of fortune, were we as I have just now hinted, privy to the transactions of men and the reasons of God's dealing towards them, we should be frequently obliged to acknowledge his justice in the retribution. We might oftentimes see men fall into the snare, that they had insiduously spread for the feet of
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of others ; and the evil they have intended and brought upon them, returned in full measure upon their own pate. We might see the corroding curse which the oppressor has entailed upon his acquisitions inseparably cleaving to them, and becoming the plague and vexation of his posterity till it had entirely consumed them.

GIVE me leave therefore in the first place, to point out wherein the nature of oppression consists. (For to that part of the text I shall confine myself.) And secondly to lay before you a consideration or two as dissuatives against it.

Now to oppress the poor, is in any sort to take the advantage of their necessities, so as to add to the burthen of their poverty and distress. Various are the ways in which this may be done ; but two only I shall particularly mention, as perhaps the most common in practice, in order to enrich the oppressor. And the one is in buying and selling, and the other is in paying
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of wages for work. For as in the one case, he is an oppressor, who takes more for his commodity than it is worth, all circumstances considered: so in the other, is he, who can undervalue the labour of his workman, so as not to reward it as it justly deserves: but when both these evils concur, the pressure upon the poor must be heavy indeed. These two assertions seem to carry such plain truth, that, I apprehend, they will meet with contradiction from none. But the grand cause of oppression seems to lie in this mistake, that the one judges his commodity worth whatever he can get for it: and the other, that the labour of the workman deserves no more than he can oblige him to take: and therefore whilst this man thinks himself at liberty to make the most exorbitant demands; the other makes no more scruple of beating down the hireling to a most shameful degree.

BUT I would ask in these cases, whether there is no other rule for our conduct, but our own arbitrary wills? Whether, where there is no prescribed law whereby

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to regulate these proceedings, we have a right to deal with our fellow creature, as our dispositions, how *mercenary* or *mean* soever, may prompt us? If so, there can be no such thing as oppression; but every man may make what use he pleases of the advantages in his power, without being at all concerned how his behaviour may affect the rest of mankind.

BUT we cannot suppose the Deity to have so little regard for the comfort and happiness of his creatures, as to leave them thus to the dictates of their own depraved passions, since this would be to open a wide gap to all manner of cruelty; and to abandon by far the greater part of us, as a prey to the raven and oppression of the rest. No! as he has given to the natural world, so has he likewise to the moral, a law; which as in the *one* it is not, so neither in the *other*, ought it to be broken. He has impressed upon the mind of every rational existence a sense of common equity and justice, a capability of distinguish-

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ing betwixt what is right and what is wrong; which was it not clouded or perverted by prejudice or self-interest, would be of excellent use to restrain us, from making encroachments upon the natural rights of one another. But we in particular enjoy the benefit of an additional law, that of revelation; wherein, we may observe, that he has expressed in numerous places, an especial care for the prevention of the evils now before us. A few of them for your satisfaction I shall mention, and they are such as these. *If thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God; for I am the Lord thy God. (a)*

AND again, *Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, (whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates) at the day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry*

(a) Lev. xxv. 14, 17.

against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee. (a)

AND says the prophet Jeremy; *Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong: that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work. (b)*

AND says the prophet Malachi, foretelling the speedy advent of Christ: *I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages. With many others of the like import, that, was it necessary, might easily be produced.*

As to settling the measure and manner of our dealing with one another in these respects, it was not possible; because the circumstances of things are so variable and fluctuating, that no certain standard could at any one period be fixed. But there is a law of perpetual obligation, which, if upon all occasions we would have recourse

(a) Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. (b) Jer. xxii. 13. (c) Mal. iii. 5.

to, we should find it our surest director: and that is, *to do to others, as we would they should do to us*; and not to offer any usage to them, which would appear hard and unreasonable for us to receive. Were we to regulate our conduct according to this law, a much less profit might oftentimes probably content us: we might judge it reasonable and our duty to confine ourselves within the bounds of moderation, because it would appear otherwise to us, to be obliged to comply with any thing beyond them. Let the seller in imagination at least, change places for a while with the buyer, and the master with his servant: and how will they find their sentiments reversed, when they view themselves in this different situation! They may possibly see just cause in many instances to condemn a behaviour which now may escape their notice; and be able to produce against themselves accusations of partiality and oppression, which were they at present duly sensible of, might make

make their *flesh* tremble for fear of the judgments of God.

I know, the usual argument with which men of this turn support themselves, is the example of others: they only act, they cry, like other men, and they can see no reason why they should not.

BUT if the example of others will be a justification for them, they may have this to plead, for every species of wickedness: in many other cases, to be able to produce precedents, I hope, they would think no warrant for their imitation: and why then in these of oppression is their imitation excusable? Whatever is wrong becomes not right, because multitudes pursue it; and is so far from being the *less*, for the number of offenders, that it is therefore the more offensive to Almighty God. If upon an impartial consultation with our own breast, the behaviour of others appears culpable to us, it is certainly our duty to endeavour to rectify it by our example, rather than by transcribing it to confirm them in their errors.

THIS we should be easily convinced of, was not our interest so nearly concerned in the decision; but like a cloud it envelopes the mind and prevents it from discerning the truth; and compels us to lay hold of an argument to support us in a practice which in a case of a different nature, we should be ashamed to make use of.

BUT give me leave, as I proposed secondly, to lay before you a consideration of two as dissuatives from oppression. And first then let us consider, that he that thus oppresseth the poor is guilty of great inhumanity.

As every man is a member of the great body politick, so ought he to look upon himself obliged, as far as his power enable him, to contribute to the comfort and well being of every individual in it. He should however entertain no view which may prove destructive in any way to the happiness of others: and though he may be permitted to pursue his private interest

interest, it should never be to the infelicity and ruin of his neighbours. But he that oppresseth the poor has only one end in view, and that is to increase his riches. He can unreluctantly sacrifice the happiness of *numbers*, in order to promote what he esteems *his own*: and seems as regardless of the hardships and miseries they endure, as if they partook not of the same common nature. It is a shocking consideration, that the avaritiouslyness of some, shall prompt them to defeat the kind designs of providence to serve us all. That when God has liberally showered down his blessings upon us in an uncommon plenty, there should be found some not only so unthankful as to deny his goodness, but so greedy of gain as for the sake of obtaining it, to endeavour to convert his mercy into a sore calamity, by introducing all the effects of scarcity, in the midst of a very great abundance. It cannot be supposed that God intended his blessings for the advantage only of a few, but for the benefit of us all; and why

should not all then be permitted to enjoy the benefit of them?

THE poor, it is well known, have lately undergone great hardships, and suffered much through the want of the conveniences, and even the common necessities of life; and who shall dare to deny, that the great author of *all good gifts*, has thus remarkably *blessed our victuals with increase*, to silence all complaints, and to satisfy them, particularly *with bread*: (a) that by experiencing after their affliction so seasonable a supply, they might be taught to look up with gratitude and praise to the hand that dispensed it, and for ever to remember, and serve him for it. And if so, how presumptuous must be the wickedness, not only to deprive them of the bounty of their heavenly Father; but as to some of them, probably of an affecting call to seriousness and salvation; to set themselves to oppose the gracious intentions of the Deity; and in spite of omnipotent good-

(a) Psa. cxxiii. 16.

ness to ease, to continue the pressure upon the poor and needy.

But secondly, let us frequently call to mind, and ruminate seriously upon the words of the text, *That he that thus oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, shall surely come to want: that however an inheritance by such means may be got hastily at the beginning, the end thereof shall not be blessed.* (a) There is an infinitely just being who narrowly observes all our actions; and who not only in a future, but in the present state will not suffer oppression to escape with impunity; but upon the wealth of the oppressor has denounced a curse, which sooner or later will certainly destroy it. So that the oppressor by his evil practice may indeed load his conscience with guilt; but shall leave his ill gotten good, so encumbered with misfortunes, that poverty shall assuredly be the portion of his descendants at the last.

Now were the disappointments and ca-

(a) Prov. xxi. 21.

lamities which such an one entails upon his offspring fairly represented to his view, could he see now, what in the course of Divine Providence will come to pass when he is no more; — his children in the hands of spoilers and oppressors; or struggling with unavoidable and grievous misfortunes; and perhaps with the extremity of beggary and contempt; how would such a scene affect him with the deepest commiseration and sorrow! especially when he reflected that all this was occasioned by his own unjustifiable proceedings; he would surely conclude with Solomon, that *better for them would be little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure (a)* and such trouble entailed upon it: that he would act the part of a more kind parent by endeavouring to *secure* as well as to *obtain* a possession for his children; and therefore to be more solicitous about the *manner*, than the *matter* of his acquisitions; that the favour and protection of heaven might accompany and prosper them, and

(a) Prov. xv. 16.

that

that generations yet unborn might rejoice in the effects of his conscientious and benevolent dealing.

THIS would be to consult the true happiness of his posterity, as well as his own; to procure the peace of God for himself, and his blessing for them: that with comfortable hopes in his mercy, he might in his last moments resign his soul into the hands of his Creator; and recommend his fatherless children to his paternal care and goodness, who has promised to be *a father to the fatherless; (a)* and that *the seed of the righteous shall never be forsaken. (b)*

Now to God the Father, &c.

(a) Psal, lxxviii. 5. (b) — xxxvii. 25.

nevolent dealing.

There would be to console the true friends of his posterity, as well as his own; to procure the peace of God for himself, and the blessing for them: that with comfortable hopes in his mercy, he might in his last moments resign his soul into the hands of his Creator; and recommend his fatherless children to his paternal care and goodness, who has promised to be a Father to the fatherless; (b) and that the Lord of the righteous shall never be forgotten. (c)

S E R M O N V I I I .

T H E

U N L A W F U L N E S S A N D I M P I E T Y

O F I N V A D I N G T H E

M I N I S T E R I A L F U N C T I O N

C O N S I D E R E D .

SECTION VII

THE

MINISTERIAL FUNCTION

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S E R M O N VIII.

JEREMIAH xxiii. 21.

I HAVE NOT SENT THE PROPHETS, YET
THEY RAN: I HAVE NOT SPOKEN TO
THEM, YET THEY PROPHESED.

IN the days of the prophet Jeremiah
there was a set of arrogant and presump-
tuous men, who by falsely pretending to
divine inspiration, assumed to themselves
the character of the true prophets of the
Lord, as himself complains, *causing his
people Israel to err, and strenghtening them
in their wicked ways*: as they dared to act
without his commission, so they spoke
without his direction; imposing upon a
too credulous people the sentiments and
imaginations of their own hearts, for the
dictates of the infallible spirit of God. It
is

is these of whom in the words of the text, the Almighty by the mouth of his prophet declares, *I have not sent them, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied: but behold, says he, I am against these prophets, that use their tongues and say, he saith: Behold I am against them that prophecy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them: and cause my people to err by their lies and by their lightness, yet I sent them not, nor commanded them.*(a) And to his people in order to secure them from the bad designs of these arrogant pretenders; he addresses himself in this most solemn manner; *Thus saith the Lord of host, hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophecy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.*(b) And this was not an evil peculiar to that time and people, but has infested the church in all ages. Our Saviour observes to the Jews in his time, *in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments*

(a) Ver. 31, and 32.

(b) Ver. 16.

or traditions of men: (a) and as there were false teachers amongst them, so ever since the promulgation of the gospel have there been such amongst christians; as if wherever God should be pleased to *sow his good seed*, the enemy was resolved by *sowing his tares*, to endeavour to choak and destroy it.

MEN, either through mercenary views; or a fond conceit of their own abilities; or possibly sometimes prompted by a mistaken zeal for the advancement of piety; have been excited to break in upon the order of the church, and to introduce innovations into the religion of Christ: insomuch that we find it a principal care of the apostles themselves, to arm their proselytes against the infusions of such, and to keep them steady, and constant, in the profession and practice of that sound doctrine, which they had delivered to them.

THAT the present age abounds with many of this temper we need not be told: since we see men not at all remarkable

(a) Mat. xv. 9.

for any natural endowments; and in a great measure, if not altogether, destitute of the assistances and benefits arising from a liberal education; from some of the fore-mentioned motives, setting up for guides and instructors of their brethren and not only acting in the publick capacity of preachers, without any lawful call or authority to do so; but boldly asserting strange doctrines, which have no foundation in scripture; serving to amuse, and feed the spiritual pride of some of their hearers, whilst they fill the rest with perplexity and doubt. From the passions and infirmities of mankind indeed, these are proceedings we must frequently expect to hear of: and therefore it is, that the apostle observes, *there must be bereft amongst you, that they which are approved, or the sincere among you may be made manifest.* (a) And likewise our blessed Lord himself declares, *it must needs be that offences come, but wo, nevertheless to that man by whom the offence cometh:* (b) Though

(a) i. Cor. xi. 19.

(b) Mat. xviii. 7.

It is natural to suppose that there always will be men to disturb the church of Christ, and to endeavour to seduce his members from her, yet as there is no force nor necessity imposed upon any thus to act, this pleads no excuse for those who shall do so: — but as they run into his ministry without his mission, and teach what in his word he commands them not, they shall be responsible to him for the impiety of their presumption, and the bad consequences of it.

AND how great the impiety of it is, I shall endeavour to convince you, not only for the sake of those who already may have been guilty of it, but to deter others from the like practice, who possibly might be drawn into it by their example.

AND for this purpose, let me observe to you, that preaching to, or publicly instructing the people, has in all ages by the authority and direction of divine revelation, been esteemed an office peculiar to the sacred function: and this not only since the promulgation of christianity, but

before the blessed author of it appeared amongst us. For under the Jewish dispensation we cannot but observe with what a solemn care, the Almighty calls and appoints men, both to the priestly and prophetic office: and endeavours to secure to them, the unmolested discharge of their duty, by menaces sufficient to deter the most daring, from any encroachment or invasion of the provinces of either. With respect to the former, these are his words to Moses: *Thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priests office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. (a)* And of the other, (says he) *The prophet that shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, even that prophet shall surely die. (b)* These were the messengers of the Lord of Hosts, (c) whom himself either immediately, or by an established rule appointed to deliver his will and law to the people. And so much reverence our blessed Saviour himself expressed to this au-

(a) Num. iii. 10. (b) Deut. xviii. 20. (c) Mal. ii. 7.
thority,

authority, that notwithstanding the scribes and pharisees were become extremely corrupt in their manners, yet he enjoined the multitude to pay a serious attention and regard to *that*, which in the capacity of teachers they received from them.

The scribes and pharisees (says he) *sit in Moses seat, and therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not.* (a) A plain proof that though they were *bad men*, they were *legal ministers*; and that the immorality of their lives, would be no excuse to others for the non-observance of their doctrines.

AND the Saviour of mankind, is so far from altering or abolishing any part of this divine institution, that by his own practice he approves and confirms it: he entered not upon his publick office, till he received power and authority from above: as the apostle observes, *not glorying himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, thou art my son, to*

(a) Mat. xxiii. 2.

day have I begotten thee. (a) And before any of his followers took upon them to publish his doctrine to others, they received a commission from him to do so. For as the evangelist inform us, *he ordained twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.* (b) But these not being sufficient to reap the great harvest (c) of converts he foresaw ready to embrace his gospel : therefore it is said, that *he appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.* (d) And that the same order might be observed during the continuance of his church upon earth, he imparted to his apostles the same power and authority to constitute others to the same offices, unto which he had constituted them. *As my father, says he, has sent me, even so send I you :* (e) that is, as I have received authority from my father thus to send you, so I communicate to you the same autho-

(a) Heb. v. 5. (b) Mark, iii. 14. Luke, ix. 1.

(c) Luke, x. 2. (d) Luke, x. 1. (e) John, xx. 21.

rity in like manner to send others when I am gone: and this power I confine not personally to you, but will that it be conferred by you upon your successors, and so be continued in my church to the end of time: *For lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world. (a)*

AND such punctual observers were the apostles of this rule, that they admitted none, even into the lowest offices of the ministry, without being regularly and solemnly ordained by prayer and imposition of their hands. Insomuch that we read in the 6th. chapter of the Acts of the apostles, that when the *Grecians* complained *against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration*; that is, were not so duly regarded in the distribution of the charity money, as they apprehended the others were; the apostles told them, that the business they were then engaged in—that of preaching the gospel, was of such necessity and importance, that they could not neglect it;

(a) Mat. xxviii. 20.

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neither had they leifure to take upon themselves the care and management of the poor : and therefore they ordered the disciples to *look out seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom they, viz. the apostles, might appoint over this business.* They do not say, make choice of seven men, whom *you* judge proper, and set them apart for this work ; but reserve entirely the power of designation in their own hands : and accordingly it is said, that the number which was selected *was set before the apostles, who, when they had prayed, laid their hands on them,* and so consecrated them to their office. This was the solemn method of calling men to any share in the ministry, not only in the apostolick age, but in every succeeding one : for that power which Christ conferred upon his apostles, they conferred upon their successors ; and so, has it been transmitted from generation to generation, and remains in his church to this very day. And therefore any man, more especially where the
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ecclesiastical government, is regularly formed and established according to this plan, who shall presume without commission derived from this authority, to take upon him any part of the ministerial function, ought to be looked upon as a profane invader of a most sacred province, and greatly guilty of impiety towards God.

AND indeed that such are the sentiments of the church of England in this matter, may not only be inferred from her invariable practice, but from her articles which she has prescribed as the rule of it: in the twenty third of which, she declares, “ that
 “ it is not lawful for any man to take up-
 “ on him the office of publick preaching
 “ or ministring the sacraments in the con-
 “ gregation, before he be lawfully called
 “ and sent to execute the same.”

AND those whom we of our communi-
 on look upon to be invested with the law-
 ful authority to call and send such persons,
 I need not inform you, are the bishops
 and pastors of the church, whom the pro-
 vidence

vidence of God has been pleased to set over it.

NAY, even the most numerous sect of dissenters amongst us, whom, we believe in this particular to have deviated from the apostolick and primitive pattern; yet agree with us in an opinion of the indispensibleness of a solemn ordination: they differ from us in their sentiments of the *manner* and *persons* from whom it is to be received; but allow the *necessity* of the thing; and presume not to discharge any acts of their ministry, without being first delegated by those, in whom they apprehend a power to be lodged sufficient for that purpose. How far they may err herein would neither be pertinent to my present business nor design to inquire; which are to convince those of their presumption who start up amongst ourselves, and assume themselves the office of publick preachers, without having any lawful call or authority to do so.

THAT christians in a private manner have not only a liberty, but that it is their duty

duty to exhort and *admonish* one another, the scripture informs us, and reason will shew us the advantages likely to attend it : but when men endeavour to draw others after them, and assemble them together in form of religious congregations ; when they so far take upon them the ministerial function, as publickly to preach to, and instruct such people, (supposing their intention to be good, and their doctrine to be the same) yet the least that we can say, is, that they are in a grievous error ; as they violate the rule which Christ himself has established ; and break in upon, and disturb the order and government of his church.

How (says St. Paul) shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear, without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent. (a) — “ Plainly enough intimating (as a “ great writer observes) that to preach the “ gospel without being sent, is as impos- “ sible in a christian or moral sense ; as it

(a) Rom. x. 15.

“ is in a natural one for a man to believe
 “ what he never heard ; or to hear what
 “ was never spoken to him.” (a)

BUT let us ask, on whom or on what,
 do these pretenders found *their* mission?
 Who sent them to preach the gospel ; or
 what authority can they produce for their
 doing so ?

As we know they have no external call,
 they probably will tell us, they have an
 internal one : that by the spirit of God,
 and an extraordinary regard for the salva-
 tion of their fellow creature, they have
 been prompted and prevailed upon to ap-
 pear in the character they assume.

To have a regard for the souls of man-
 kind, must be allowed to be laudable and
 christian : and in a private and proper
 manner, whether in administering advice,
 consolation, instruction, or reproof, let
 them express it as deeply as they please.
 But then let them remember this aposto-
 lick rule, *that we must not do evil, that
 good may come* : how good soever may be

(a) Stack. Fol. p. 135.

the end we propose, if we pursue wrong means to obtain it, we are likely to bring a curse upon ourselves, instead of a blessing: if other men are not so good, as we could wish they were, we must not do that which is bad ourselves in order to make them better; but rather in this case, as well as every other, observe this concise direction—do what we lawfully may, and leave the issue of all to God.

AND as for their being called by the spirit of God:—this possibly may gain some credit amongst the weak and enthusiastick; but will bear no weight with any sober and considerate man: he must readily perceive that it is an inconsistency by no means to be reconciled to the wisdom and veracity of God: since we can never imagine that he would prescribe to us a rule in his holy word, whereby to regulate our conduct in this particular; and at the same time by the dictates of the same spirit, press men to act in a direct violation of it. So that from this observation we must either conclude, that the rule given

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us in scripture is not to be regarded; or that the pretensions of these men are false: and which conclusion it is safest to make, I submit to their own serious consideration.

BUT supposing their pretensions to the spirit to be as they would have them believed, even this will be insufficient to justify their irregular proceedings. In the 13th. chapter of Acts, we read *that the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work, whereunto I have called them*: though they were called by the Holy Ghost to the work of the ministry, this did not excuse, or supersede the necessity of an ordination from man: and therefore in the next verse we are informed, *that when they to whom this revelation was made, had fasted, and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away*. So that the call of the spirit itself (which by the by we can never admit these intruders to have) would not be sufficient to qualify them for the ministerial office, unless

less they were likewise regularly appointed and consecrated thereto by man.

AND indeed we can never imagine, that the Almighty would subject so serious and solemn an institution; nor the peace and government of his church to such endless confusion and disorder, as the liberty these men assume, must necessarily introduce. For if every one who fancies himself of ability for such an undertaking, or thinks he feels the impulse of the spirit exciting him thereto, may judge this an authority sufficient to preach; what a door would this open, and what an encouragement would it prove to enthusiasm and pride. What a variety of teachers; and of congregations would spring up amongst us? — All must necessarily terminate in schisms and divisions; the order and constitution of the church would be broke and dissolved; and the decency and beauty of religion and publick worship be defaced and lost.

LET these men then not be ashamed to recant, and reform from, an error, when the guilt

guilt and ill consequences of it are so notorious; but rather let them be afraid and ashamed to increase their guilt by persisting in it! As they have *run*, without a mission from God, they have little reason to expect his blessing: nay! have rather cause to apprehend his displeasure, for acting contrary to that rule he has so solemnly established for the well ordering and peace of his church: and let them take care, lest by an obstinate perseverance herein, they provoke God to give them up to strong delusions, that they may be deceived themselves, and become the unhappy instruments of deceiving others! And as to those, who are deluded hearers of these unauthorized teachers, let me advise them speedily to withdraw themselves from their assemblies, lest by their presence they countenance and encourage them in their presumption, and so become partakers of the guilt of it. If they consider them only as they generally are in themselves, *ignorant and illiterate men*; it is surprising that they can be so weak and infatuated

infatuated as to be captivated by them; that they can be so superficial and injudicious as to take *whine* and *grimace* for *sanctity*; and *melancholy looks* and *gestures* for *true religion* and *godliness*. But if we consider them as introducing confusion into the worship of God, and occasioning schisms and divisions in his church; forcing themselves into his ministry without his commission, and contrary to that solemn rule which he has laid down in his holy word; ye cannot but be sensible that their proceedings are irregular and presumptuous; and that therefore it is a duty ye owe to God, as well as to the peace of the community of which ye are members, immediately to abandon the congregations of these men; lest like the adherents of *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, ye be involved in the consequences of that presumption.

AND I would have you remember, that what might at first be pitiable as a weakness or an error, after you have been admonished of it, may cease to be so; and

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may afterwards owe its continuance more to a spiritual pride, or to a temper that will not be informed.

If therefore ye are resolved to persist in this wrong way (for wrong it certainly is) we shall notwithstanding as the only method left us, not forbear to offer up in your behalf, our prayers to Almighty God in the words of our excellent litany—that he would be pleased to “bring you and all such as have erred and are deceived into the way of his truth,” and finally to the fruition of his eternal blessedness. — And this for the sake and through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour.

S E R M O N I X .

**THE FOLLY OF EXPECTING
POSITIVE ASSURANCES OF
OUR SALVATION;
O R,
HOPE THE CHRISTIAN'S SUPPORT
IN HIS
JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE INTO ETERNITY.**

SERMON IX

THE FOLLY OF EXPECTING
POSITIVE ASSURANCES OF
OUR SALVATION
O R
TOPE THE CHRISTIAN'S SUPPORT
IN HIS
JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE INTO ETERNITY.

S E R M O N IX.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 12.

NOT AS THOUGH I HAD ALREADY ATTAINED, EITHER WERE ALREADY PERFECT : BUT I FOLLOW AFTER, IF THAT I MAY APPREHEND THAT FOR WHICH ALSO I AM APPREHENDED OF CHRIST JESUS.

THE principal design of St. Paul in this epistle to the Philippians, is to keep them steady in the profession and practice of that religion in which they had been instructed by him : particularly in this chapter he bids them beware of some of the Jewish believers ; men who pretended to embrace the christian faith, but yet retained such a veneration for circumcision and other Judaical ceremonies, as

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even

even to persecute those who complied not with them. Which was a proceeding the apostle entirely condemns, both because persecution was in itself repugnant to the spirit of christianity and because the obligation to the Jewish rites was no longer in force, nor of any avail to recommend a christian to the acceptance of God. For says the apostle, if there were any privileges to be claimed upon the account of such observances, no man had greater reason to plead them than himself; who was not only a Jew, and brought up in the Jewish religion, but was always a most strict and zealous observer of it. But whatever advantages might since redound to him, he could readily forego for the sake of Christ. *Yea, doubtless says he, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.*

the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead: not, as though I had already attained, or (as the learned Dr. Hammond annotates on these words) had my crown immutably and irreversibly yet assigned me; either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Which is as much as if he had said, notwithstanding I strictly observed the Jewish religion, whilst I professed myself a Jew; and have paid no less regard to the christian since my conversion to that, yet I do not therefore imagine myself so absolutely certain of my reward, as that I cannot miss of it; but I follow after, that is, I sedulously pursue the course I am in, and exercise all the diligence I can, in hopes that I may at length attain to that state of blessedness which Christ

has prepared for those, who constantly and perseveringly endeavour after it.

FROM which portion of scripture, I shall take an occasion to prove to you this proposition; that whilst we remain in this life, there is no possibility of pronouncing with an absolute certainty concerning our own salvation.

AND the first consideration which I shall produce for this purpose, is, because our present state, at least so much of it, as from the time in which we begin to distinguish good and evil, to its expiration, is always and altogether probational. We are sent into this world by the Almighty Creator of it, not to spend a few days or years in a wanton gratification of our appetites, and then to lie down for ever in an utter insensibility; but by a due use of our reasoning faculties, and a proper attention to those duties which God has commanded, to qualify and prepare ourselves for the enjoyment of a better: there is a
certain

certain business to be performed, and various trials to be undergone, by us all, before we can, as we ought, approve ourselves to our great Master, and be received into his beatitudes: and one year or two, though we may behave properly during such a period, will not be deemed a sufficient discharge of our duty; but all of them however many God shall vouchsafe us, ought to be employed principally in his service, as for this end they are designed and allotted us by Providence. And therefore in scripture the time of our sojourning here is termed *a day*, (a) in which we are earnestly enjoined *to work, lest the night come upon us when no man can*: (b) plainly implying that our labour for eternity, should never cease till the night of death determines it; but that from our earliest reason, to the latest moment of our present existence, should we sedulously attend to our spiritual vocation.

OR that like racers in a course, we should still push forward with all due ea-

(a) Heb. iii. 7. (b) John, ix. 4.

gerneſs and caution, not ſlackening our pace till we arrive at the goal : that is, not relaxing our care for religion, and the ſalvation of our ſouls, till death puts a ſtop to our efforts, and introduces us to the fruition of our reward. For piety and virtue are of ſuch a progreſſive nature, that how far ſoever we may proceed in them, there is ſtill room for farther advances : and notwithstanding many allurements to ſin we may have reſolutely withſtood, there may yet be more, and ſtronger, with which we have to ſtruggle. And though we may have fought manfully hitherto under the banner of Chriſt Jeſus, we cannot be ſecure of future ſucceſs ; ſince the enemy of our felicity is both ſubtle and powerful ; and when by *force* he cannot, by *ſtratagem* or *ſurpriſe*, may poſſibly prevail. Accidents which we foreſee not, may expoſe us to many temptations, to which in a great meaſure we may now be ſtrangers ; or an unexpected change of circumſtance, may introduce a freſh variety of them ; but whether we ſhall act in
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this different scene with equal steadiness and integrity, is not possible for the most sagacious to ascertain. The man, for instance, who, from the affluence in which he is placed, finds no assaults made upon him to draw him to injustice, may upon the recollection, experience that satisfaction, which will naturally arise from a consciousness of having conducted himself in all his dealings, with the strictest fidelity and honour. But let a reverse of fortune load him with distress, and the temptations common to such a state with all their assistants flow in upon, and strongly beset him; and whether he shall remain constant and immoveable in his attachment to these duties, nothing but the trial itself can determine. So sad an alteration in his outward condition, may possibly produce as sad an alteration in his conduct; and he who in his *riches* might support a good character, and appear both in his own and in the eyes of other men, honest and estimable; may in his *poverty*, especially when

when secrecy shall conjoin his exigencies to try him, be found to be devoid of an upright principle, and that his forbearing to be dishonest was only owing to the absence of temptation. And if we neither know what trials we have yet to undergo, nor how we shall be able to behave ourselves under them, how can we pronounce any thing with certainty concerning our own salvation? For salvation being the reward of our obedience, and only promised to be conferred when our spiritual work is concluded, it is an inconsistency to think it adjudged to us now, before we have fulfilled the condition upon which it is bestowed. For those that say they are absolutely certain of their salvation, must likewise affirm in consequence of such an opinion; either that they shall not any more be tempted—or that they shall be able to resist and overcome all temptations; neither of which it is possible to know without a particular revelation from heaven. A vouchsafement, which however it may be boasted of, will never gain credit with
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the wise and considerate part of mankind; and can only serve to expose those who pretend to it, to the pity of some; and the contempt of others.

For though the grace of God may be always sufficient for us, we may not always be willing and disposed to follow its dictates; it may dissuade us from evil and prompt us to good, but as it does not irresistibly compel, it will always leave us the liberty to embrace, or reject its proposals, just as we please. And what favourable opportunity may yet be given for sin; or how far passion and irregular desires may gain an ascendancy over us, we can no more tell, than we can dive into the depths of futurity: and till every danger of this sort is past, it is as impossible to pronounce ourselves secure, as it is for the sea-faring-man, till he is safely arrived at the haven where he would be: and as shelves, rocks, or tempests, unseen and unthought of, even in sight of the harbour, have not seldom proved the destruction of the one; so some unnoticed
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lust, or unexpected assault has greatly endangered, if not totally effected the ruin of the other.

WHICH brings me in the second place to consider, some of the unhappy examples of this nature, which for our warning and admonition are recorded in scripture. Aaron who was so particularly distinguished in the favour of the Almighty, (a) as to be appointed by himself, both his prophet and his priest, so grievously offended by his compliance with the request of the children of Israel, concerning their molten image, (a temptation which he did not foresee) *that the Lord, it is said, was very angry with him, to have destroyed him.* (b) David, who was once said to be *a man after God's own heart,* (c) by an accidental sight of Bathsheba the wife of Uriah, had such a passion excited in his breast: as hurried him into the two most dreadful sins of adultery and murder. And his son Solomon, though blessed with every testimony of

(a) Exod. vii. 1. 30. (b) Deut. ix. 20. (c) Aet. xiii. 22.

the divine love and goodness, and who indeed had expressed great regard for the honour and worship of God, yet shamefully fell from his allegiance to heaven, *into the most gross and abominable idolatry.* (a) Judas, though chosen by our blessed Saviour himself to be one of the twelve, which should more immediately attend upon his person, by not guarding against the avaritiousness of his disposition, was prevailed upon by embracing an opportunity to gratify it, to forget his great obligations, and to betray the Lord of life and glory. And St. Peter another apostle, who seems to have been a man of a remarkable zeal and affection for his master; who declared *that though he was to die with him, yet would he not deny him*; and had the resolution to draw a sword in his defence, with which he *smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear*; (b) yet even this man, did with oaths and imprecations abjure him, *saying I know not the man.* Sufficient are these examples to alarm

(a) i. Kings, ii. (b) John, xviii. 10.

the fears and caution of the most assured amongst us ; and to make us *take great heed lest we also fall.*

THEY, no doubt, had as much reason to think themselves secure of the divine favour, as we can ; and we therefore ought to think ourselves as much in danger as we find they were ; and consequently can pronounce nothing with certainty concerning our own salvation.

AND therefore I observe in the last place, that it is *hope* only, founded on the promises of the gospel, that must be the christian's support, during the time of his sojourning here. *We are saved*, says the apostle, *by hope* ; but *hope that is seen, is not hope* ; for *what a man seeth*, or indeed by any method whatever is made certain of, *why doth he yet hope for ?* (a) If we are absolutely assured of our salvation, hope must naturally cease, and it becomes a certainty.

BUT they who pretend to a certainty in this matter, must be certain likewise

(a) Rom. viii. 24.

that

that they cannot fall from it; for if it was possible for them to fall from it, it could not be a certainty; and if it is not possible for them to fall from it, the freedom of their wills, upon which account only they become responsible beings, must necessarily be restrained: for whilst they live in the world, they must like other people, be exposed to the temptations of which it is full: and though it is possible they may resist them, yet whilst it is possible that they may not; they must not presume upon the certainty of their salvation.

WHILST they do well, *they may hope*, and indeed with *great reason*, that it will be finally well with them: and their hope may probably be strengthened and increase, in proportion to the progress they make in their duty; but how high soever it may rise, it is still but *hope*; and can be nothing more till it is swallowed up of fruition. It is in this respect, as to the joys of heaven, as it is in temporal advantages, that we never pronounce them certain, till we have them in possession: the more

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the probability, and the fairer the prospect of success, the stronger our expectations of obtaining them will naturally be; but disappointments so frequently happen, and such various accidents our pursuits and endeavours are liable to, that we dare not think ourselves sure, till we really are so. And in like manner the farther we advance in life and our duty, the stronger hopes we may entertain of final blessedness; but there may be so many impediments and difficulties which we do not foresee, and may not be able to conquer, that there is no being certain of felicity until our last conflict is past, and death has introduced us to the enjoyment of our reward.

God, no doubt, will fulfil his promises to all that shall by their behaviour here stand entitled to them; but whether we shall be in that number, we cannot certainly tell till our work is entirely finished; which cannot be before the *day* of our labour expires: but we must whilst we persist in our duty, comfort ourselves

with

with hopes that we shall finally obtain it ; and if we so persevere to the end, no doubt, we shall be saved.

AND great cause we have to bless and praise our merciful father, who through the sufferings and intercession of his son, has given us reason to entertain such a comfortable hope ; since otherwise despair of acceptance with a being infinitely pure and holy, must have overwhelmed our souls, whenever we had adverted to the imperfections and infirmities of our nature : piously therefore has our church ranked *this* with the most inestimable blessings which God has vouchsafed us ; when “ above all she offers up her grateful acknowledgments, for the redemption of the world, by Christ Jesus our Lord, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory ”.

LET us therefore be diligent in the discharge of our duty, and like the great apostle St. Paul, *forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press conti-*

nually towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and let us be not only content but thankful "for that
"blessed hope of everlasting life, which
"God has given us in and through him:"
for it is not only *all* in our present state that we have reason to expect, but all that is needful for us; as in all difficulties and dangers, in every circumstance and condition in life, it will, like a cordial, refresh our drooping spirits, and will inspire us with comfort and patience whilst we *run the race that is set before us*. And whatever boasts you may hear of *inward illumination and assurances*, if you would not impose a deceit upon yourselves, and destroy the quiet and peace of your own minds, believe them not; for they are nothing but the effects of a spiritual pride, or a deluded imagination:—either the vain pretensions of men, who would be thought to have a more familiar intercourse with God Almighty than the rest of mankind; or who by long indulging such thoughts, or pleasing their fancy with such ideas,
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begin at length to think they really feel them.

BUT if they mean honestly and are themselves deceived, their weakness may claim, and recommend them to pity; but if for ends of their own, they thus design to deceive other weak, but well minded people, they ought to be ranked amongst the vilest of men, and treated with the utmost contempt. But whatever may be the motives and ends exciting such, as you value the peace of your minds, give no credit to their pretensions; lest whilst you go about to seek, what is unreasonable to expect to find, you become perplexed and doubtful concerning your soul's salvation! For if you believe that such illuminations and assurances are given to others, and that you, with all your diligence and search cannot experience any thing of them, you will be apt to draw conclusions very much to your disquietude; and to entertain the most tormenting fears and doubts concerning your future safety; which will not only rob you of all the comfort and felicity of life, but subject you to all the

wretchedness of melancholy and despair. As therefore you would avoid these effects, fly from the causes of them;—affect not to be wise *above that which is written*, nor repose any confidence in those who affirm themselves to be so; but sedulously labour in the work of your spiritual vocation, and be not anxious about the *time or manner* in which God shall give you your recompence.

BUT in imitation of your humble redeemer, *who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross*, support yourselves in your journey through the present life, with the *hope* and prospect of obtaining a better;—travel on in faith and patience, till you arrive at that period which divides time from eternity, when your *faith* and *hope* shall terminate in *vision* and *enjoyment*; and God shall for ever distinguish those that are his, by a joyful reception into his bliss and glory.

UNTIL which that we all in his own good time may attain, &c.

SER-

SERMON X.

THE

UNREASONABLENESS

AND

DANGER OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE

AND CENSORIOUSNESS

EXPOSED.

SERMON X.

UNFAITHFULNESS

AND

DANGER OF SPIRITUAL DEATH

AND CENSORIOUSNESS

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S E R M O N X.

LUKE xviii. 14.

FOR EVERY ONE THAT EXALTETH HIMSELF, SHALL BE ABASED; AND HE THAT HUMBLETH HIMSELF, SHALL BE EXALTED.

OUR blessed Saviour who was perfectly acquainted with the predominant passions of mankind, as well as a serious observer of their outward deportment; and from whom they were as little able to conceal the vices of their minds, as their vicious behaviour, endeavours to rectify not only the bad practices, but mistaken notions of his hearers, by seasonably adapting his discourses to their several and spiritual exigencies. An instance of this kind, amongst many others in his revelation, we have in the parable preceding the text:

text : *Which, it is said, he spake unto certain, which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: the duties which some amongst them performed, he knew, they set too high a value upon, and valued themselves too highly for the performance of them: they not only arrogated to themselves much merit in their own religious services, but judged too meanly of the religion of others; and were therefore extremely delighted with the contemplation of their own extraordinary attainments, whilst they treated every body else as low proficients in duty, with a supercilious pride and contempt. Two men, (says he) went up into the temple to pray; the one a pharisee, and the other a publican. The pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner! I tell you this man*

went

went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

WHAT our blessed Saviour observes of this pharisee, may, it is to be feared, with equal truth be said of numbers now; who with an air of assurance can thank God that they are not as other men are; that they are more holy and virtuous and in a greater degree of favour with heaven than the rest of the world; and secretly exult in that spiritual superiority, in which they stand distinguished in their own opinion; and, as they fondly imagine; in the judgment and esteem of God.

BUT hear what the author of christianity, and the final judge of christians has upon this occasion declared! *Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

WHENCE we may conclude, that a proud and over-weening conceit of our religious services is displeasing to the Almighty, and consequently prejudicial to our eternal interest;

interest; and that the most likely way to recommend ourselves to his acceptance and reward, is to be like our humble redeemer *lowly in heart*.—And that we may make it our desire and care to be so; I shall, in the first place give you several reasons against such a disposition as, we find, this pharisee indulged. And secondly from a consideration or two, endeavour to make you sensible of the dangerous consequence attending it.

AND the first reason I shall give, why such a disposition ought not to be indulged, is, because it must be founded in general upon a presumptuous and unwarrantable surmise: for whether we are better christians than many whom we scruple not to condemn as much inferior to ourselves in goodness, is impossible for us to determine; unless we were perfectly acquainted with all that passes within the retirement of their breasts, and with the particular circumstances of those temptations, to which they may stand exposed. We find ourselves solicited to evil, and
know

know the pains it costs us to resist it; we may perceive the iniquity of our own hearts; the wrong motives and ends which oftentimes influence our conduct; and the many defects and impurities which fully and detract from our very best services, which are considerations sufficient to reduce the vain aspirations of the most ostentatious mind; and to make the most perfect amongst us, cry out with the humble publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* But whether others,—or to what degree, in these respects, they may have been affected, is beyond the penetration of the most sagacious to ascertain. They may have laboured under temptations, much more violent than any that have befallen us; and though they have been so unhappy as to give way to, and to have been overcome by them; it may have been after *greater reluctancy*, and a more *vigorous opposition*, than any we have had occasion to express: the *motives* and *ends* of their actions may, for all we know, be more pure and laudable, than any that have excited us; and the *imperfections* attending

tending their devotion, nothing equal to those we experience, whether in *number*, or *malignity*. So that to assume the seat of judgment, and to pronounce decisively in these matters concerning ourselves and others, is not only to assume the prerogative of God himself, who alone can be acquainted with the *number* and *nature* of our offences, but may involve us in the guilt of great presumption and uncharitableness: for to that all seeing eye which is privy to every thought of our hearts, and to every circumstance of what we do, we may appear *much more*, and others *much less*, culpable, than we are ready to believe: so that we probably may pass a severe sentence of condemnation upon many, who may be much our superiors in true piety and disinterested virtue: and whilst we stand with the proud pharisee and cry, *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are*; — other men may have just cause to be thankful that they are not like us. And therefore, in the words of the apostle, *judge nothing before the time*

until

until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of God. (a)

BUT again, supposing ourselves to be altogether as good, as we may vainly conceit we are; yet even then, this disposition of the pharisee is not to be indulged, because it is not unto us, but unto the grace of God that the praise is to be ascribed. For, (as the apostle argues) *who maketh thee to differ from another, (b) not only in personal and worldly advantages, but in those that are internal and respect the soul? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?*

IF, as the scriptures assure us, that all our sufficiency is of God; that of ourselves we can do nothing; but *that it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure; (c) whatever cause we may*

(a) i. Cor. iv. 5. (b) i. Cor. iv. 7. (c) Phil. ii. 13.
hence

hence collect for gratitude and self-abasement, there does not appear the *least* for ostentation: "If all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed not from ourselves, but from God;" if it is he that suggests the good, excites the will to embrace it, and affords the ability to perform it; whatever we do that is acceptable in his sight is indeed our *happiness*, but not our *merit*; and abundant reason we have to be *lowly* and *thankful*, but none to be *proud*: carefully we ought to watch and improve the overtures and opportunities his grace may present to us, that we *may work out our salvation*, (*a*) not puffed up with pride and vain glory, but *with fear and trembling*,—best becoming such impotent,—such frail,—and dependent creatures.

It must be allowed indeed that as God has constituted us free agents, he has endued us with a liberty to resist the gracious solicitations of his holy spirit; and to condemn and reject every method intended

(a) Phil. ii. 12.

to bring us to the purity of his gospel and to eternal blessedness: but it is likewise as certain, that we could have no power whether to think or perform any thing for this purpose, unless it was given us from above. It is in things spiritual, as in those that are temporal: the concurrence of our own endeavours is necessary, though it is a kind providence which furnishes the means and opportunities for our advancement: so his invitations to goodness we must listen to and obey; and the ability he affords, we must resolutely exert; but still without his grace and succours we should remain poor helpless wretches, not able to move one step towards the completion of our duty. If therefore upon having made any considerable progress in holiness, our minds become elate with vanity upon that consideration, we greatly forget our own condition, and that divine mercy to which we principally stand indebted: we arrogate to ourselves *that glory*, which is due only to *God*; and may probably provoke him to withdraw from us these his

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spiritual blessings ; and abandon us to our own strength on which we have too much boasted and relied : *For, says the apostle, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. (a)*

BUT indeed, it is much to be feared, that whatever such men may pretend to holiness, they have not in truth a great deal of it : for reality and appearances do not always go together in religion, no more than in other things ; and many may be very strict observers of the *form of godliness, (b)* who know little or nothing of the true *power* thereof. So it was with the pharisees of old, notwithstanding their high pretensions to an uncommon sanctity and devotion : for the blessed Jesus himself on whom the most artful disguises could not impose, has thus in part characterised them : *that they devoured widows houses, and for a pretence made long prayer ; (c)* that they punctually regarded the rituals, things comparatively of a trifling

(a) Jam. iv. 6.

(b) ii. Tim. iii. 5.

(c) Mat. xxiii. 14, 23, 28.

nature ; but omitted the weightier matters, of their law, judgment, mercy, and faith : and that they outwardly appeared righteous unto men, but that within they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. How truly despicable must such false votaries appear in the sight of an all-inspecting being ; how considerable soever in their own vain imaginations !

BUT whatever may be the case with men now, of this at least we may be certain, that such as grow conceited and censorious upon their proficiency in religion, betray a great want of knowledge of its true meaning and design. For what can be more inconsistent than to be proud of *that*, which, if rightly understood would teach them not to be proud of *any thing* ? The blessed author of it in his whole deportment shewed the greatest humility, and proposes himself upon that account particularly as a pattern for the imitation of all his followers ; Learn of me, says he, for I am meek and lowly in heart.

heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls, (a) And what was the will and behaviour of our Lord, his apostles endeavoured not only to transcribe, but to prevail upon others to do the same. Their injunctions are such as these: Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind. (b) And I say through the grace given unto me, to every one that is among you, not to think of himself more highly, than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith: (c) and again, Be not high minded, but fear; (d) and Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. (e) So that we may safely pronounce, with the same inspired writer, that if any man have not this spirit of Christ, this lowliness of mind, he is none of his. (f) And he that considers the depravity of his own heart, how often he offends in word and deed, and

(a) Mat. xi. 29.

(b) Col. ii. 12.

(c) Rom. xii. 3.

(d) Rom. xi. 20.

(e) Phil. ii. 3.

(f) Rom. viii. 9.

oftner still in thought, must surely discern the folly and impiety of presuming *at all* upon his own righteousness; and that it is no *merit* of his own, but *that* of his all-sufficient Redeemer, that must recommend him and his imperfect services, to the pardon and acceptance of a merciful God.

THIS indeed is one material consideration, from which the dangerous consequence of this pharisaical disposition appears.

WHICH was the second thing I proposed to lay before you: for if it is repugnant to the practice and commands of our Lord and his apostles, it surely for that reason *alone* ought to be carefully guarded against; not only because they may justly be supposed to enforce nothing, but what is reasonable and good in itself; but because this is the rule by which we must finally be justified, and by which we must be condemned. This spiritual pride is therefore as cognizable at the bar of Divine

Justice, as any other crime; and as it involves us *here* in the guilt of disobedience to the laws of Christ, so will it *hereafter* in the condemnation which such guilt shall deserve.

BUT there is this farther consideration which should make us afraid of indulging this disposition — that it probably will prevent not only our attention to, and discovery of our faults, but our real progress in our duty: for whilst we are delighted with the contemplation of our spiritual attainments, many follies and defects will escape our notice; and we shall become less solicitous after *farther improvements*, as we imagine ourselves so *greatly improved* already. The man that is lowly in his own eyes, and is sincerely desirous to serve and please God, will scan over every action with the most minute exactness, and will find all his care and circumspection necessary, in *diminishing* the number of his offences, or in rendering *less imperfect* his piety and virtue. Upon a review of his behaviour he will always

ways be sensible, that what he has done, might in some respects have been done better; and that in those parts of it which are not *wholly and absolutely* bad, there is yet much more evil in them, than there ought to be: and from sentiments like these, he naturally concludes himself obliged continually to add to his watchfulness and diligence, and is therefore daily gaining some spiritual advantage; still *pressing* with eagerness and caution, *toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* (a)

WHEREAS he that pleases his fancy with notions of his great proficiency in godliness, will be apt to overlook many vices and defects, of which an indifferent observer may perceive him to be guilty; the glare of his piety, like looking on the meridian sun, will render him blind to his faults and foibles; and self-examination will appear little necessary to him, whilst he thinks that there is little or nothing in his conduct, that stands in need

(a) Phil. iii. 14.

of amendment : and so like the boasting pharisee, he will be more fond of admiring and expatiating upon *what he is*—than in endeavouring to make himself *what he ought to be*.

BUT how much more eligible and safe is the publican's behaviour, who fixed his eyes more upon his *vices*, than his *virtues*; upon the *mercy* of God, and not his own *merits*: who employed not his time in judging *others*, but *himself*; and though possibly he might be as conscientious and good a man as the pharisee, who scrupled not so severely to condemn him, yet he found sufficient within himself to make him *humble* in his deportment, and *earnest* in his supplication.

LET his behaviour therefore in this respect, be an example for our imitation.

LET us transcribe indeed the pharisee's works, but avoid his censoriousness and ostentation; and let us endeavour to perfect holiness, but let it be in the fear of God and with the publican's humility! *For why*, says the apostle, *dost thou judge thy*

thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. (a) How ridiculous as well as unchristian is it then, to be searching out for faults, and bringing accusations against one another, when we must all appear before the same awful tribunal? No! let it rather be our study and endeavour to prepare our own accounts, than to produce charges against other men! Let us examine our own hearts and actions as severely as we please, but pretend not to penetrate the breasts of our neighbours, but judge and speak of them with all imaginable candour; lest whilst we think to magnify our own righteousness, we greatly detract from it in the sight of heaven; and become guilty of a breach of christian charity; which, we are told, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, and thinketh no evil; (b) and without which, though we have all faith, so that we could remove mountains — though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor — and give our bodies to be

(a) Rom. xiv. 10.

(b) i. Cor. xiii.

burned;

burned; all this, and whatever else we can do to make a noise and shew of religion, — *will profit us nothing.*

SEND, therefore, thy Holy Ghost O Lord, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee. Grant this for thine only son Jesus Christ his sake.

S E R M O N X I .

A SERMON PREACHED
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
INFIRMARY AT MANCHESTER,
IN THE
PARISH CHURCH OF STOCKPORT,
SEPTEMBER 5th. 1756.

THE
SERMON
PREACHED

AT THE
CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN

ON THE
SUNDAY OF THE
TRINITY

BY THE
REV. FATHER

THE
CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN

IN THE
CITY OF PARIS

ON THE
SUNDAY OF THE
TRINITY

BY THE
REV. FATHER

THE
CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN

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SERMON XI.

JOB xxx. 25.

DID NOT I WEEP FOR HIM THAT WAS IN
TROUBLE? WAS NOT MY SOUL GRIEV-
ED FOR THE POOR?

UNDER that affecting reverse of
condition, which the Divine Provi-
dence for wise and good ends permitted to
befal holy Job, there is no confideration
which seems to have inspired his mind
with such strong consolation, and affiance
in the favour of God, as that which oc-
curred from a review of the benevolent
application of his affluence and power:
instances of this kind, he is represented,
as frequently mentioning; and not, we
may suppose, to inform, or to remind the
Deity of any thing which he imagined,
had

had either escaped his notice, or that he might have forgot ; — much less from a pompous display of his own merits to infer the injustice of the divine dispensations ; for this would have been, contrary to his character, *to have charged God foolishly* : (a) but principally to recommend those virtues to the practice of succeeding ages, which recommended him in so distinguished a manner to the favour of his Maker ; who was pleased to give this testimony of his approbation of his servant, *that there was none like him on the face of the earth, — that he was a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil.* (a)

As Providence had liberally *blessed him*, so he liberally imparted to others *its blessings* : insomuch that indigency and distress always found a comforter and an assistant in his endowments ; and those pressures which he could not totally remove, as far as his abilities impowered him, he would endeavour to *alleviate*. *Did not I weep* (says he) *for him that was in trouble ?*

(a) Job. i. 22.

(b) Job. i. 8.

was not my soul grieved for the poor? His heart was made up of tenderness and compassion, and his *band* an obsequious minister to obey its dictates: otherwise indeed his tears and grief would have redounded as little to *his* advantage, as they must to the advantage of *others*, had not he exerted himself in redressing the sorrows he bewailed, and in furnishing a supply for those wants, a sense of which so afflicted his soul.

MEN we are — and *of like passions* too, it is hoped, with him: as we partake of the same common nature, we surely are not devoid of the same principles of humanity; but like him susceptible of tender impressions, — like him inclined to commiserate and sympathize with our suffering brethren. But are we like him then inclined to communicate? or are we sorrowful *spectators only* of our fellow-creature's calamity; and think to discharge all our obligations to him by a few doleful expressions or unavailing tears? Far be it from me to suppose, what I am far from having

having any reason to believe ! But rather that ye are ready to prove yourselves Men both in *word* and *deed* ; — in *tenderness of heart*, and *liberality of hand*. And if ye are thus disposed, suitable occasions will never be wanting to excite, and to exemplify these good dispositions. Cast but your eyes around, and numerous are the objects which solicit relief ! — But at this time, I must beg leave particularly to recommend to your consideration, a most unexceptionable and laudable charity ; which though attended with vast expence, and but lately engaged in, is by the assiduity and encouragement of those, who seem to have its completion greatly at heart, already advanced so far towards perfection, that it now stands an *honor* to the town which gave it birth ; and which is itself an *honor* to the kingdom. The INFIRMARY at MANCHESTER it is, which I mean, which needs not my tongue to proclaim its usefulness and praise ; since that is much better done, by the many once miserable creatures, who have found shelter
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and relief under its hospitable roof; and owe to *it* the recovery of their health and limbs; which, *without it*, they probably might never have re-enjoyed. That such a charity as this, may meet with all desirable success, and may for ever flourish and abound amongst us, must surely be every *man's wish*, and every man's *earnest endeavour* to promote. Had the benefits proposed from it, been even confined to the place where it is erected; it would have been great pity that the hands of the benevolent undertakers should have waxed faint and weary, for want of any assistance and supplies necessary to carry on so pious a work. But when the design of it is in some sort general; much more should the contributions be, to its support: that by so dividing the burden amongst a many, it may become the less sensibly felt by all, and every individual therefore may the more chearfully submit to a reasonable share. We in this town and neighbourhood have in some instances already experienced the advantages of it;

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and as fresh objects shall present themselves, and petition the blessings it so abundantly bestows, its doors, I doubt not, will be open for their reception, and its care and goodness extended to more.

SEVERAL amongst us, it would be injurious to their virtue not to acknowledge, have given the best testimony of their approbation of this charity, by generously concurring with the measures first proposed, and still relied on, to maintain and perfect it: their example, I trust, will have its proper influence and effects upon the minds of others; so that every man, though not in an equal degree, yet in proportion to his ability, will liberally contribute; and embrace with joyfulness this opportunity afforded him of becoming a benefactor to so noble a design.

AND that this may be the case; I shall beg leave in the first place to make an observation or two relative to this charity. And secondly to lay before you some farther

farther considerations to excite you to a liberal contribution towards its support.

Now it is usually alledged by persons addressed in most of our applications in behalf of others, "that they have no objection against complying with your request, but the apprehensions, either that their bounty will never reach the sufferer's hands; or if it does, that they may want prudence and discretion to manage it aright."

BUT now I observe with regard to the charity here recommended, we cannot entertain the least suspicion of this nature: when, we know, the contributions are lodged in the hands of men of probity and estate; too well circumstanced to be in danger from a temptation to such mean injustice; and too upright and conscientious not to reject it with indignation: whose receipts and disbursements are regularly and annually made, and submitted to publick inspection; and who, therefore can have no interest in view, but *that* of the

poor creatures they so zealously subserve; nor any satisfaction beside *that* which they reap in their own breasts, from a consciousness of having discharged a most benevolent and christian office. These are the hands into which your liberality is to be conveyed; which are altogether as *incapable* of perverting it to a *wrong use*, as they are *capable* of applying it in the most *effectual manner*, for the benefit of those for whom it is intended. Were the poor indeed, for whose advantage they act, to be the immediate receivers of your bounty, they probably might either *not be willing*, or *not know how*, properly to apply it: but in the hands whereinto it is to be conveyed there can be no possibility of either. A large and commodious building the generous managers have provided for their comfortable reception; unto which (as to another *Bethesda*) they may repair, and probably find a cure, which to every *other place and means* had been denied them: every thing that is judged requisite to mitigate their pains, or to forward their recovery,

recovery, according as their several conditions may require, is plentifully afforded them : gentlemen of approved knowledge and skill both in physick and surgery assiduously attend, and impart to them their best advice and assistance. And as if all this was not sufficient, the clergy in succession pay there their constant visits; to awaken in them at this seasonable juncture, a sense of their past sins, as well as of their present duty; and to join *with them*, and *for them*, in supplications for success, to that Almighty being, without whose blessing all human endeavours must prove ineffectual and vain. In short, there is not any thing omitted, which can be thought conducive to their comfort and recovery; but all imaginable care is taken that their *spiritual* as well as *corporal* diseases may be cured; and that, if possible, they may receive health and salvation both of body and soul.

AND if any thing farther is needful to be said, to recommend to your hearty encouragement such a charity as this; let

me in the second place, desire you more particularly to consider the *persons* for whose benefit, all this is principally intended. It is for that unhappy part of mankind, who not only labour under bodily affliction, but this accompanied with the melancholy appendages of *poverty and want of friends*. Whose grievances are not *otherwise* incurable, than as by the meanness of their condition they are rendered *so*; that is, was it not for this kind provision, they might linger out a tedious life in helplessness and pain, because unable to procure those means necessary to give them ease and health. This many times might prove the case, not with single individuals only, but with fathers of families: on whose labour the subsistence of numbers depends, and from whose inability numberless infelicities naturally flow: if the *head* suffers here, all the *members* must feelingly suffer with it; and wives and children, *disconsolate and destitute*, must all be involved in one common calamity and wo: those who might have been helps, must
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many times, how reluctantly soever, become burthens to themselves, as well as to the community; and, if death ensues, *what gives the forest aggravation to its pangs*, must leave to the often unkind treatment of the world, all that is *near and dear* to them in it. Who can consider such a scene of distress and not be moved? Or what heart that has the least pretensions to humanity and tenderness would not cordially commiserate it, and wish to administer relief? Would not desire to be instrumental in raising *such* from their beds of want and affliction—in restoring health to *them*, and *them* to their families?

HERE then, as you have the *objects* before you, so have you likewise the *means* to relieve them! When by throwing in your contribution to the maintenance of this charity, you, like the merciful Samaritan, *bind up their wounds*, as it were, *pouring in oil and wine*; (a) and kindly conduct them to an hospitable inn, where

(a) Luke, x. 34,

the utmost care and skill will be shewn for their comfort and recovery.

BUT it is not from your compassion only, as you are men, that I expect to succeed; but likewise from the sense of your obligations to this duty, as you are christians.

YE have seen what an eminent pattern of goodness holy Job stands recorded in the sacred writings; how powerfully his heart pleaded the cause of the distressed; and how readily his hands ministered to their necessities: *He was a father to the fatherless,—to the poor that cried;—and to him that had none to help him.*(a) And whatever inducements he might have to be so, are, at least as many, *and should be as powerful* to us, under the gospel dispensation: when we have as positive commands for the performance of acts of beneficence and love, and as positive assurances of their acceptance with God, as any revelation from heaven could communicate to him: when we have moreover the example of our blessed Redeemer to excite

(a) Job. xxix. 12, and 16.

us, who *went about doing good* continually : and when we have his infallible word, that for every instance of kindness we shew to our suffering brother, we shall, in the universal assembly of immortals, receive a publick acknowledgment, and a suitable reward from him. If any thing can prevail upon us to be generous, it must surely be this consideration ; when our generosity indeed, by the mercy of our God, shall benefit ourselves more than others ; and what we this way expend, shall be securely reposed in heaven ; and at the great day of accounts and retribution, returned to the donor with infinite advantage. *The more bountifully we have sown, the more bountifully then shall we reap : (a) For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, (b) but will surely record your alms, like those of Cornelius, (c) in the book of his everlasting remembrance ; and in due season, if ye faint not, (d) will most abundantly recompence you out of his immense beatitudes.*

(a) ii. Cor. ix. 6.

(b) Heb. vi. x.

(c) Acts, x. 4.

(d) Gal. vi. 9.

PROMISES of temporal blessings there are many in scripture annexed to this duty; which, no doubt are, and by the holy spirit of God, were designed to be, encouragements to the practice of it. I might therefore remind you, that to be charitable to the poor, is a probable means to derive success upon your endeavours, and to obtain an augmentation of your store; *that there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; that the liberal soul shall be made fat; and that he that watereth shall be watered also himself:* (a) But as promises of an eternal nature, must in all reason be judged to be of greater worth, in the estimation of a being that is to exist *for ever*; I choose rather to observe to you as *christians*, that can look forward for your remuneration in *another state*, that *if after your power ye shew mercy to the poor, ye shall assuredly lay up for your future enjoyment, a treasure in heaven.* I might, with the strictest truth, assure you; that there is nothing will more effectually recommend you to

(a) Prov. xi. 24, 25.

the esteem of mankind, than a compassionate heart, and a liberal hand; but what, is this consideration compared with the favour of the Lord of the universe; and with that high advancement, which they will surely procure you in his kingdom of glory! Where the Judge of all the earth, shall publicly recount your virtues and proclaim your reward, with an inasmuch as ye have visited the sick, or contributed towards their relief, ye have done it unto me; and therefore come unto me ye blessed of my Father.

To conclude, ye see what a charitable occasion is now presented to you, and some inducements I have laid before you to prevail with you, to embrace it: Let every man then be disposed in his heart, as God has enabled him! *that he that hath received plenteously may give plenteously, and he that hath but received little, may nevertheless do his diligence gladly to give of that little: Ye rich! remember that you cannot do too much for your souls; and for your*
souls

souls it is that you do it : and ye poor ! recollect for your comfort, that a portion, not exceeding the widow's mite, if it is all your circumstances allow, will be as acceptable to the Deity as the greatest abundance. The church officers will now wait upon you to collect your several contributions ; and I pray God ! they may be such as may redound to the honor of this place—draw down prosperity and blessings upon it from above,—and be a blessing to you to eternal ages.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R M O N X I I .

A S E R M O N P R E A C H E D

A T T H E

P A R I S H C H U R C H O F S T O C K P O R T

D E C E M B E R 27th. 1761,

U P O N A C C O U N T O F T H E D E A T H O F T H E

H O N . L A T E L A D Y W A R R E N ,

B E I N G T H E D A Y A F T E R H E R I N T E R M E N T T H E R E .

SEEMON XII

A SEEMON PREACHED

AT

PARISH CHURCH OF STOCKPORT

DECEMBER 20, 1881

UPON ACCOUNT OF THE DEATH OF THE

HON. LATE LADY WARRINGTON

AND THE DAY AFTER

SERMON XII.

LUKE xxiii. 28.

— WEEP NOT FOR ME, BUT WEEP
FOR YOURSELVES, AND FOR YOUR
CHILDREN.

THE Roman governor, having condemned as the vilest of malefactors, the Redeemer of mankind, not from any proof of the accusations alledged against him, nor from his own conviction of his guilt, but through fear and the importunity of an incensed people; in pursuance of his sentence delivers him into their hands; which they were sure to see executed with all the circumstances of horror and cruelty their malice could suggest. They load his shoulders with the cross which was to be the instrument of his death,

death, and lead him away to crucify him upon it; and were attended with a numerous concourse of people, whom such an extraordinary occasion had drawn together. Some in all probability, prompted with *rage and indignation*, pursuing and persecuting him with derision and reproach, to destroy the composure of his mind, and to enhance his sufferings:—some, *out of curiosity*, to observe what would be the end of one, who boasted such high pretensions to the favour of God;—and some, though perhaps the smallest number, by *pity for his afflictions, or by an affection for his person*. These last bewailed and lamented the hardships and indignities he endured, as well as that sad event; which no doubt they heartily wished, and only wanted the power, to prevent: they see him suffering and going to suffer, beyond other men; who, in their opinion, had not deserved to suffer at all; and as they had not right notions of the design of his passion, nor of his after-resurrection; they were overwhelmed with grief at the apprehensions

prehenfions of loſing for ever their beſt friend, from whom they had been taught to expect the moſt uncommon bleſſings.

BUT he with his uſual tenderneſs and regard, adviſes them to abate their concern for him, and to be more concerned for themſelves—*weep not for me, but weep for yourſelves, and for your children*: intimating that if they knew and rightly conſidered every thing, the ſorrow they were ſo kind to ſhow upon *his* account, would be more properly expreſſed upon their *own*: that, whatever his perſecutors intended, he was going the way which Providence had pre-ordained; and was in thoſe very inſtances which were ſo ſhocking to them, obediently fulfilling *the will of his father, which he came from heaven purpoſely to do*: (a) — that thoſe ſufferings which they inflicted, were the ſteps by which his human nature was to riſe to its future bleſſedneſs; and that, that death to which they were compelling him, would open the gate to *its* bliſs and exaltation. But that his kind and compaſſionate followers, by their

(a) John, vi. 38.

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longer continuance in life, would be exposed to many and sore evils, which he in a very short time should be placed beyond the reach of: and that whilst they would be left to struggle with future difficulties and dangers, he should be seated in regal dignity and glory, at the right hand of his heavenly Father: and therefore says he, *weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.*

As the sufferings of our blessed Saviour were indeed peculiar, so were that honor and felicity with which they were recompensed: but this peculiarity consists not in *kind*, but in *degree* only; since every good christian is promised, and will finally have conferred upon him a suitable portion of them: there is the same heaven for his admission, and the same joys for his participation — the same God to look with complacency on him, and the same glory for ever to surround him: and though one good man, may differ from another; and every man be vastly different and inferior to him who is *the King of glory*; yet all shall in some measure partake of his reward.

ward. And from his gospel, may such at the hour of death, collect the same comfortable assurance he once gave to his fellow-sufferer upon the cross; — *to day shalt thou be with me in paradise*: That as soon as they cease to be here, they shall begin to be with God; and shall exchange their *earthly* habitation, for one that is *eternal in the heavens*.

A CONSIDERATION this, which will yield to the mind an unspeakable consolation under those afflictions, which are generally the most grievous and insupportable, occasioned by the loss of our relations and friends. For if from a review of their life and conversation, we can entertain a rational hope that they are departed in peace and favour with God, whatever cause we may have to grieve upon our *own accounts*, we shall see abundant reason to mitigate our grief *for them*.

GIVE me leave therefore further to enforce this consideration, as the best means to assuage or prevent an excessive sorrow, which may take its rise from any such cause.

WEEP *not for me*, says our Saviour, to his compassionate followers, *but weep for yourselves and for your children*: by which, we cannot understand, that he meant either at once, totally to suppress that tender passion, which shewed itself in them, or to blame them for it; since it was no more than a natural indication of that affection for him, which it had been his principal business to raise and cultivate. To see a person, though a *stranger*, in great, and much more in *undeserved* distress, would move compassion in every breast, that is not destitute of all humanity: but to see an *acquaintance*, a *relation*, or a *friend* in the same condition, one who stood very high in our opinion and esteem, would excite within us every emotion of tenderness and pity. And no wonder then, that the disciples of the holy Jesus, who believed him to be *perfectly innocent*, and knew him to be *universally benevolent*; who experienced largely his goodness to *them*, and observed him extending it liberally to *all men*; should melt into tears at the sight of the barbarous usage he met with; and when his behaviour

behaviour too had merited quite a contrary treatment. At such a scene to have remained unmoved would have argued great insensibility of heart, or want of sincerity in their possessions of love to their master; and would have been justly reproveable by him, who might reasonably expect every testimony of affection from them. What therefore he means is, that though there might be something in *his* case, that deserved commiseration, there was much more in their *own*; and in time they would find, that they had greater cause to weep for *themselves*, than they had then for *him*. And so likewise when the king of terrors, makes his dread approaches, towards any of those we hold most dear; when he *dissolves* a tie which nothing else could *weaken*, depriving us of the partner of our happiness, or of a most useful and intimate friend: shall we be forbid in such a case to grieve? This would be to put us to exquisite pain, and command us not to feel it;—to tell us to exchange the *softness of humanity*, for the *insensibility of a brute*. The most valuable blessings of life might

well be thought no blessings at all, if we could resign and part with them without any uneasiness.

But whilst our nature remains as it is, take from us what we esteemed a good, and we must naturally grieve in proportion as we rated its worth. The more any thing or person was endeared to us, the more shall we lament its loss: the death of a distant relation will affect us, but that of a near one in a greater degree. And every remembrance of those we loved, will in some measure renew our pain, according as they have been more or less instrumental, to our pleasure or our interest.

BUT whilst we indulge a tear as a just tribute to the memory of our dear relations or friends, and call to mind what they were in *themselves*, and what they were to *us*; let us not forget what they may be *now*; and to solace our sorrows with reflexions upon their *present condition*!—It is the peculiar happiness of the religion we profess, to furnish its votaries with the most comfortable supports, under every dispensation of the Providence of God:
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and even under *that* of the death of our friends, which generally appears one of the hardest, though as men we may have cause to grieve, as christians from the promises of our religion, we may find sufficient reason to be comforted, if not to rejoice. That revelation, which is our *guide* through this world, and on the *belief* of which our happiness in another is founded, opens to the eye of our faith, a state of infinite beatitude, into the enjoyment of which, righteous souls upon their dissolution from the body are immediately admitted.

THEIR breathless corpse is deposited in the grave, till at *the voice of the archangel and the trump of God*, it shall put on incorruption, and rise from the dust to a glorious immortality; but their spirit, that immaterial never dying substance, no sooner is loosed from the fetters of its *earthly tabernacle*, than it wings its flight to him who gave it. It leaves all its pains and sorrows together with the body; and associates with the holy Angels, to whom it is like—in glory—in honor—and end-
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less bliss. — And if we can submit with tolerable tranquillity and ease, to a separation from a person we ever so much value, when there is a reasonable prospect of improvement in either his health, or his fortune. Surely those infinite advantages unto the fruition of which, we have reason to believe death has introduced our deceased friends, are not only sufficient to reconcile our minds to their absence ; but when we seriously turn our thoughts to the contemplation of them, for their sakes to make a secret joy spring up in our breasts.

COULD heaven be laid open to our view, and could we take a survey of the felicity of the saints ; we should be so far from pitying their state, that we should ardently wish to partake with them in it : and though like St. Paul we might observe in regard to those that survive us ; *to abide in the flesh is more needful for you* ; yet such a vision would enkindle in us the same desire to *depart and to be with Christ*, (a) which we could not but allow to be far better

(a) Phil. i. 23, &c.

for ourselves. Or were those happy souls, which have tasted the celestial beatitude, permitted to revisit their earthly friends; and to be spectators of that excessive sorrow, which upon their account they often sustain; well might they say, *weep not for me, but weep for yourselves*: yours is the misery, ours is the bliss; and whilst you are in a state subject to evils numberless, we have *a fulness of joy at God's right hand for ever*.

AND upon this consideration it is, that our office for the burial of the dead is principally formed, not to benefit the deceased, but to comfort those that survive: and therefore it is, that we are there reminded, *blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*:—that we are taught to give hearty thanks to Almighty God, for his deliverance of such, *out of the miseries of this sinful world*:—that we are exhorted not to be *sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in him*;—and even to pray that God would be pleased shortly to accomplish the number of his elect, and to hasten his kingdom, that we, with all those, that are departed in the true faith
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of his holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss in body and soul."

AND of what use this consideration may be at this season, when every heart must feel a sorrow for the loss of that amiable lady, whom death has so immaturally deprived us of, your own experience will best determine. For whatever cause we may have to weep for *ourselves*, I must believe, there is none to weep *for her*; but that those virtues which shone forth in her life, and so powerfully recommended her to the *affection* of mankind, will likewise recommend her to the *favour* of God, and to an incorruptible inheritance amongst his saints. Seated in dignity and in the midst of a *very great affluence*, she was a stranger to those dangerous practices, unto which such distinctions prove strong inducements and generally lead; and though she lived in a remarkably vicious and luxurious age, her good understanding rendered her *superior to the influence, and secure from the taint*, of bad example:—wisely she rather sought for happiness in

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rational and innocent conversation and amusements; and both found and communicated more *real felicity* in the pleasing occurrences of domestick life, than in all the *noise* and *pomp* of a gay and giddy world. A sense of the importance of religion, her behaviour in this place may evince she entertained; but she did not content herself barely with an *external* exercise of religious offices (with which a great part of mankind seem very well satisfied) but with nothing less, than the *acquisition* of those christian graces, which are the *design* and *end* of all religion;—such as *humility*, *charity*, *benevolence*, and a most *endearing sweetness of temper*:—and how much she excelled in all these, her acquaintance—the poor—and all who knew her, are just enough to her memory to be ready to proclaim. She seemed indeed to possess every virtue to render herself happy, as well as those about her: and though upon this consideration her loss is the *more* sensibly felt, her present blessedness is the *less* to be doubted.—Had it pleased the Divine Providence to have granted her a
longer

longer continuance amongst us; she would have been rightly esteemed one of those instruments, which it raises up and preserves in order to bless mankind. And indeed if life can be really desirable, it must be by such, as are situated, as she was, in it: for she had not only every ingredient of terrestrial felicity bestowed upon her, but was endued with such a disposition, as was best adapted for the true enjoyment and improvement of it.—But that gracious Being to whose goodness she owed all this, had a much larger bliss for her in store, unto the fruition of which he has thus early called her; and has very feelingly convinced us, that no age, nor endowments are any security against the stroke of death. — Let us therefore whilst we pay all due respect to her memory, endeavour to imitate her virtues! And if any uneasiness arise in our breasts from the consideration of the loss we sustain; let us not forget, that the greater our loss, the greater in all probability is her gain,

THEY who were most nearly connected to her — her acquaintance — her domesticks

ticks—and the poor—have *particular* cause to grieve; as they are deprived of an affectionate relation, an agreeable companion, an indulgent and kind mistress, and a generous benefactor;—but then not upon *her* account, but upon *their own*. And let *them and all of us* learn to bless God's holy name, as well for *her*, as for all *other* his servants departed this life in his faith and fear: *beseeking him to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that we, with them may be partakers of his heavenly kingdom. Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only mediator and advocate.* To whom together with the holy Spirit be all honour and glory now and for ever.

QUIS desiderio fit pudor, aut modus tam chari capitis?

—— CUI pudor, et justitiæ soror incorrupta fides, nudaque veritas, quando ullam invenient parem?

MULTIS illa flebilis occidit: nulli flebilior, quam——

—— SED levius fit patientia quicquid corrigere est nefas.

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MUSEUM



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"I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 28th inst. and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration."

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